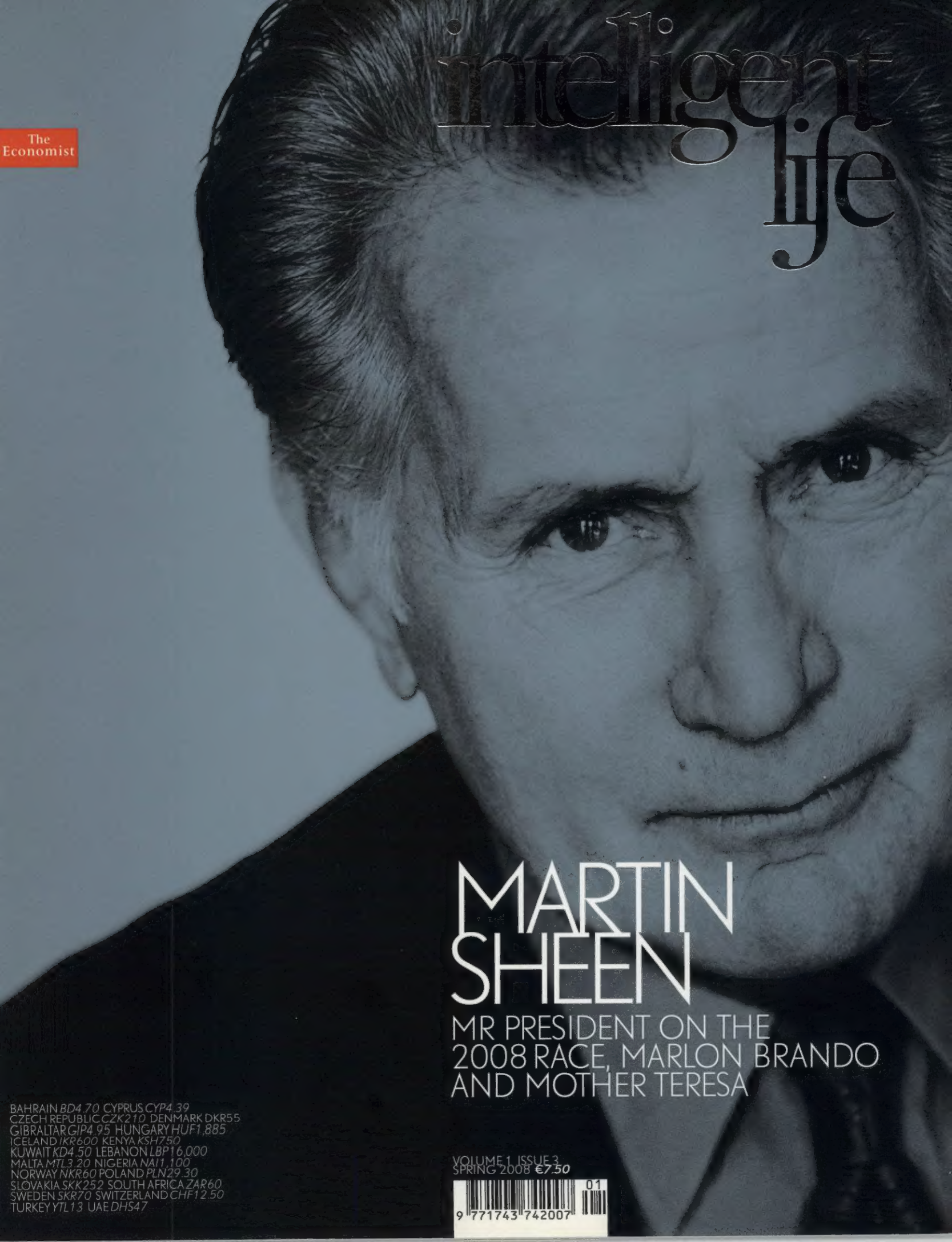

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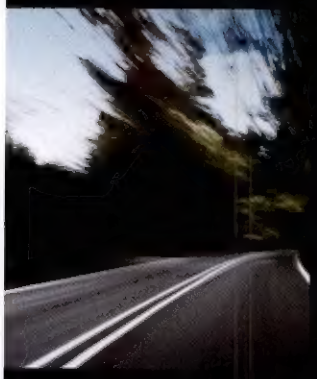

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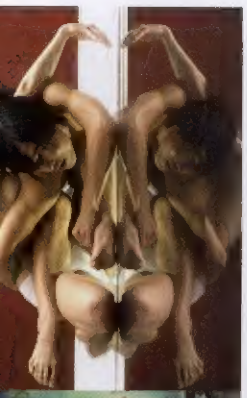

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He is probably the most presidential person in America—yet his political views often get him arrested. He talks to David Thomson

65 When robots get cuddly
In Japan, robots haven't just become part of the furniture, they are trusted friends. Dominic Ziegler does his best to bond with them

72 The new rehab: rhetoric
Addicts on Tyneside are going off the street and into the university debating chamber. Maureen Cleave joins them

88 Larry Gagosian and the art of the deal
Before the artist Glenn Brown joined Larry Gagosian, his top price was $46,000; in June a painting made $969,000. Sarah Douglas profiles the man who changed the art world

96 Hell and high water
What will you do when the world ends? Andrew Miller tries to formulate a plan

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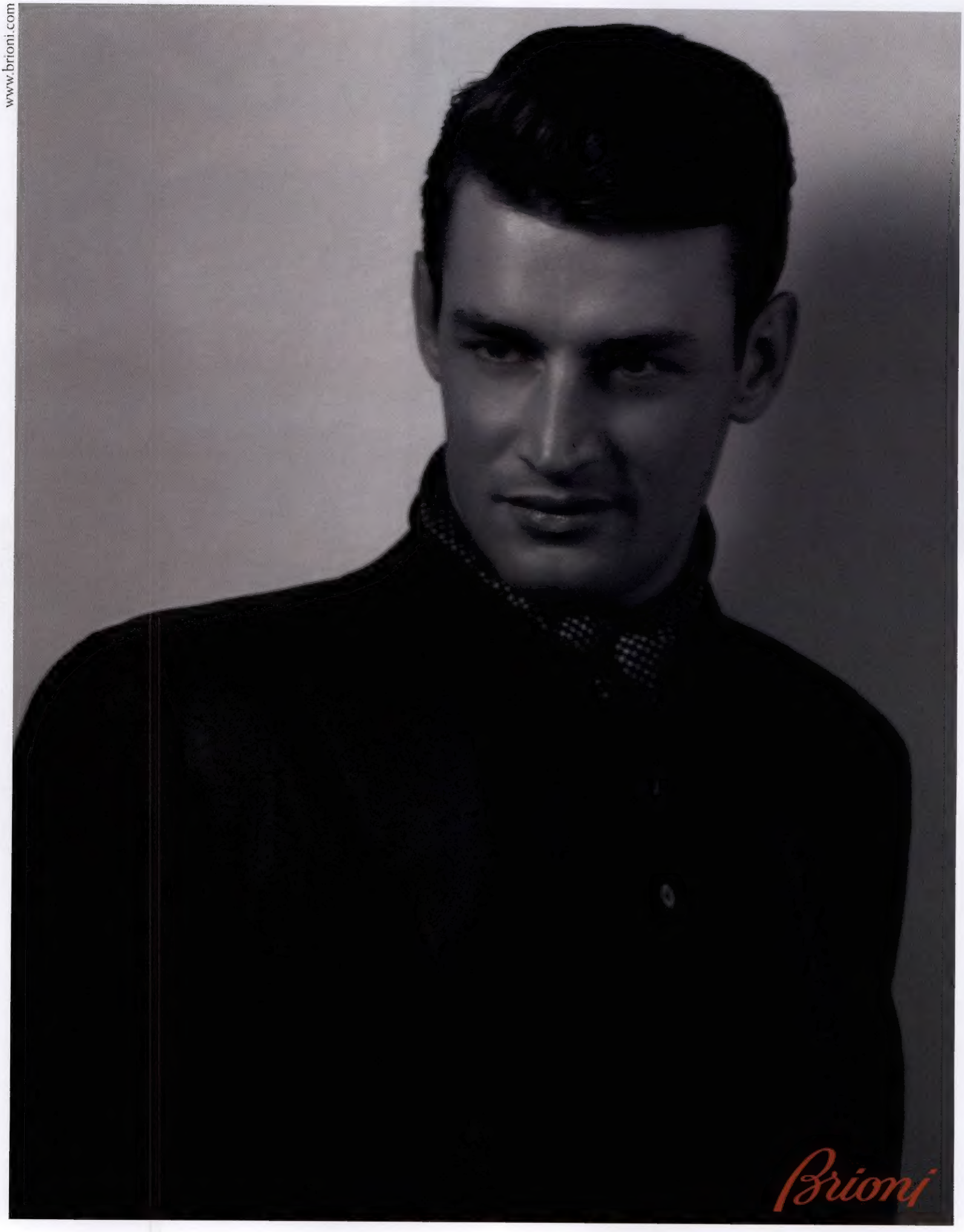
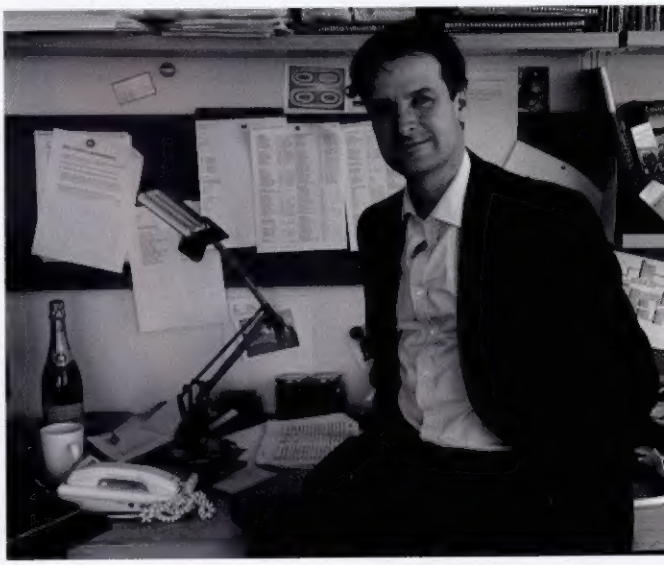


W

HAT WILL YOU do when the waters rise and the people next door catch something nasty from a chicken? At the Economist building we have the "DRP", which I think stands for Disaster Recovery Plan and involves a bunch of us grabbing a laptop and catching the Tube home. I don't know if it is global warming, nuclear terrorism or just the sound of credit crunching but, eight years after the appointed hour, millenarianism is in the air. Let this issue of *Intelligent Life* be your guide.

In "TEOTWAWKI"—The End Of The World As We Know It—Andrew Miller runs through the options (page 96). These seem to boil down to three: wait for help from the authorities, run for it, or rearrange your bookshelves. Thierry Bouet, the Parisian photographer who has shot some remarkable beds for our photo essay (page 76), has a different philosophy. He reckons we spend too long on our feet chasing success. *Homo horizontalis* confronts even normality by staging a lie-in, so TEOTWAWKI calls for a large supply of chocolate and an extra pillow. However you meet the apocalypse, Robert Butler—"A climatologist walks into a bar"(page 24)—thinks you need humour: he trawls for that rare beast, the environmentally friendly joke.

In anxious times one thing to look for is leadership. In America's high election season, David Thomson went to speak to Martin Sheen, a.k.a. Jed Bartlett from "The West Wing", who sometimes seems more presidential than any flesh-and-blood occupant of the Oval Office. He told us about acting and activism—and an audience with Mother Teresa (page 59).



You also look for salvation—which is what an unusual programme of debates is offering the homeless in Durham (page 72)—and guidance: don't worry, you know more than you think about everything, including how to survive (Thinking, page 20). And you look for hope about life after It happens. Which is where the robots come in (page 65). In the West the Daleks and the Terminators bring destruction. In Japan, where nuclear weapons once rained fire and radiation, the Snuggling Ifbot is your friend. Man and Machine are reconciled.

We have all that, and more. Our wine-list inspector has forsaken haute cuisine for Pizza Express. He likes what he finds (page 32).We travel to Mexico, and the unashamed sentimentality of Mariachi music (page 117). We dip into life in Marrakech (page 126), test the carbon-ceramic brakes on a Ferrari (page 35) and explore the world of Larry Gagosian, the most powerful art dealer of them all (page 88). We ask writers and editors to reveal who are their favourite critics (page 102). And in the first of our twice-yearly photo shoots of haute couture (page 40) we dwell on silhouette and form—to shift the gaze from glamour to craftsmanship and design.

I hope you enjoy it. And don't panic. EDWARD CARR

PHOTOGRAPH BY FERGUS GREER

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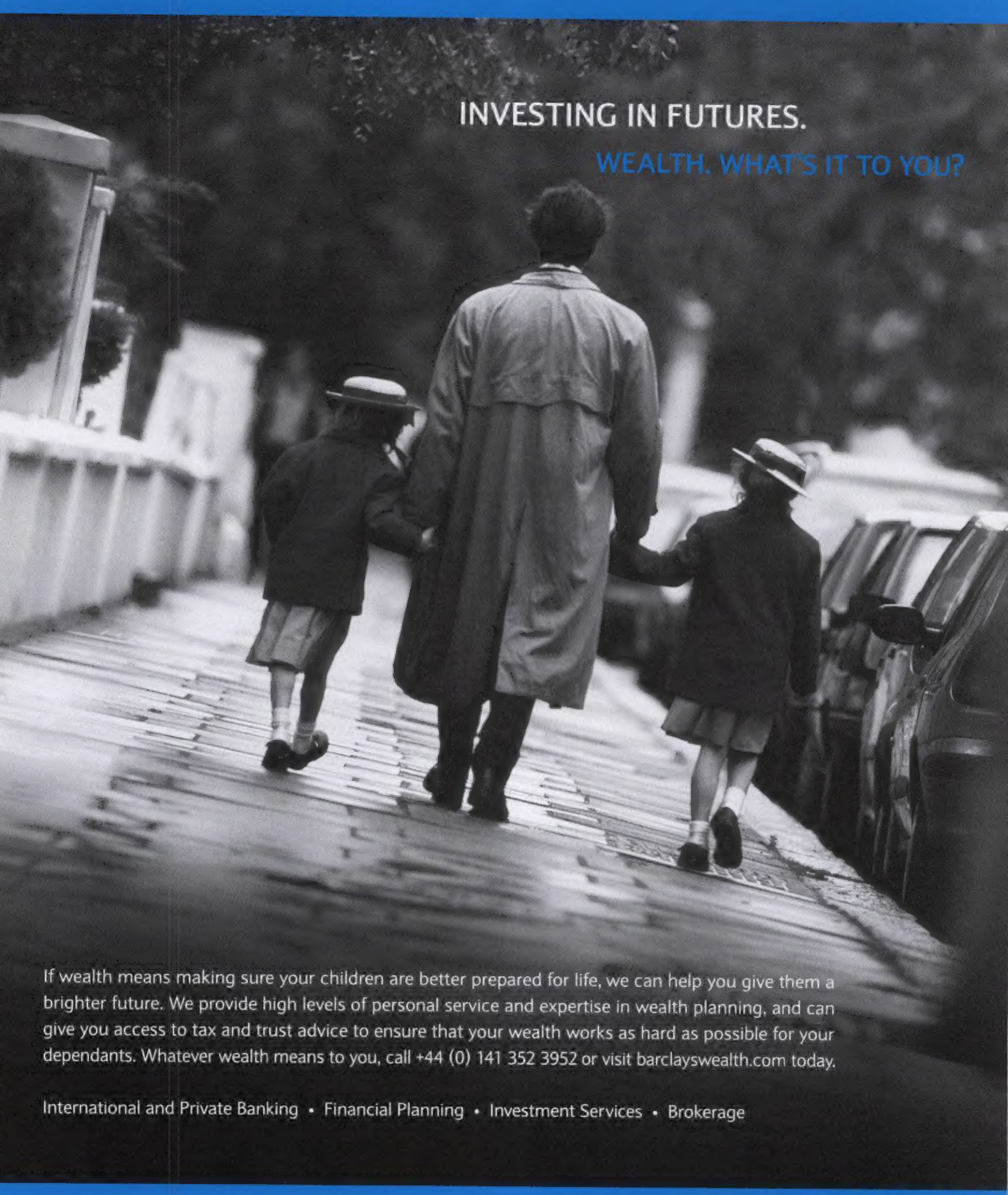

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intelligent life

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THIS SEASON

A SELECTIVE GUIDE TO THE SPRING

CHOREOGRAPHY
MEETS NEUROSCIENCE

Wayne McGregor is a choreographer on a roll. Sought after from Covent Garden to the Harry Potter films, and a winner in both the classical and modern categories at the National Dance Awards, he is also a neuroscientist, with a research fellowship at the Department of Experimental Psychology in Cambridge. For his new project, "Entity", he unites these interests and uses computers to create choreography. He believes neuroscience and dance are closely linked. "The brain is not the antithesis to creativity," he says, "it is central." These computers, or "entities" as McGregor calls them, are programmed to mimic the human thought process, but they can create algorithms that the brain can't. The aim is that they will produce more innovative ideas in the studio, and once they are on stage, McGregor hopes the works will engage with the audience's brain. "Dance is a non-verbal means of communication. I want to use cognition to replace the need for words." The new show builds on McGregor's recipe for success—power and passion. It is in two acts with visceral dancing set to the contrasting scores of a rhythmic string quartet and melody-led electronica. One half is created by humans while the other has a helping hand from science. The question is, will the audience be able to tell the difference? ~ LUCY FARMER

Entity Wayne McGregor—Random Dance, April 10th to 12th, Sadler's Wells, London. www.sadlerswells.com

MARJANE SATRAPI AND VINCENT PARONNAUD

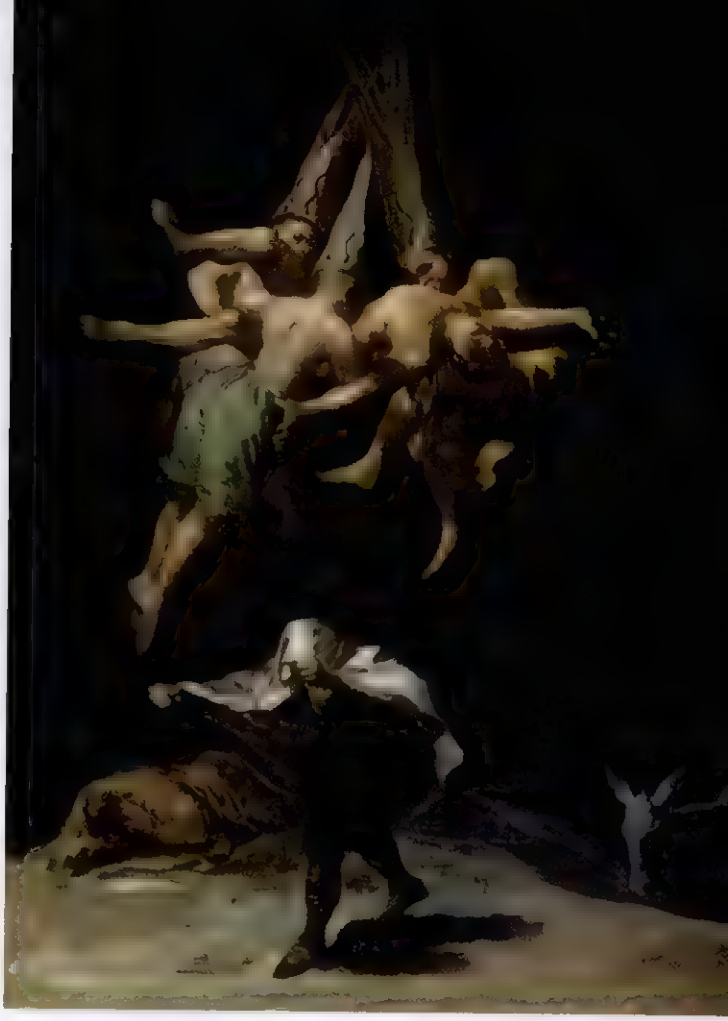
A FRESH LINE ON IRAN

"Persepolis" is no ordinary comic book. Without a superhero in sight, Marjane Satrapi's autobiographical graphic novel recounts how this writer-artist grew up in an Iran buffeted by revolution and war during the 1980s and 1990s. Now Satrapi has co-directed a film based on her award-winning memoir—and it's no ordinary cartoon. At a time when animated films are overrun by computer-generated, wise-cracking rodents, "Persepolis" offers us stylised, monochrome, picture-book art-work, and anecdotes which cover torture, firing squads and police raids. But "Persepolis", one of the most acclaimed films to be released in America last year, is as much about childhood and adolescence as it is about living in a trou-bled country. It's funnier than most wisecrack-ing-rodent cartoons, too. As its indomitable young heroine contrives to listen to Abba and the Bee Gees, whatever the relig ous author-ties have to say about it, "Persepolis" serves as a firm reminder of the human faces behind the veils and the Middle East headlines. If the animation is in black and white, the story s far from it. ~ NICHOLAS BARBER

Persepolis (12A) Optimum, April 25th

FILM AT A GLANCE

- **The Other Boleyn Girl** (Universal, 12A, British opening March 7th). When it comes to screenplays about real life heads of state, Peter Morgan rules: eg, "The Queen" and "The Last King of Scotland". His latest is Henry VIII (Eric Bana), torn between Anne Boleyn (Natalie Portman) and her sister (Scarlett Johansson). See Visual CV, page 110
- **Love in the Time of Cholera** (Momentum, March 21st). Mike Newell travels a long way from "Four Weddings" to risk the wrath of millions of Gabriel Garcia Marquez fans
- **Son of Rambow** (Optimum, April 4th). Two 11-year-old boys shoot their own home movie of "Rambo". A British coming-of-age comedy that has charmed festival audiences worldwide
- **Funny Games** (Tartan, April 4th). Michael Haneke follows his break-out hit, "Hidden", with a shot-by-shot American remake of his own almost unwatchably tense post-modern home invasion shocker. Naomi Watts and Tim Roth are the stars/victims
- **Shine a Light** (Fox, April 11th). How exciting can a documentary about a Rolling Stones concert be? When Martin Scorsese is the director, pretty exciting
- **Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull** (Paramount, May 22nd). It took Spielberg and Lucas nearly two decades to make a fourth Indie film—and that's the best title they could come up with? Never mind. It's time to see whether Harrison Ford can still crack the whip aged 65. His latest blonde is Cate Blanchett
- **Sex and the City: The Movie** (Darren Star, May 30th). Sarah Jessica Parker's terrifying fashion sense returns in the film of the series of the book of the column. ~ NB



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GOYA'S DARK SIDE

Francisco Goya's genius was always laced with something sinister. As a court painter, he lent his portraits a subtle brutality, painting his subjects with blank eyes and double chins. Later, after two serious illnesses that left him deaf and gloomy, and as Spain's politics turned bloody and grim, Goya's work grew darker, his subjects grittier cast in shadow. He crafted furiously energetic etchings of men pulling each other apart, showed the gods full of bloodlust, and painted "Flight of the Witches" (*right*), with its gruesome depiction of supernatural weightlessness against an inky-black background. The picture appears alongside two of Goya's most iconic works, "The Second of May 1808" and "The Third of May 1808", which have been cleaned and restored to mark the 200th anniversary of the Spanish War of Independence (the Peninsular war). These works lie at the centre of a sweeping chronological show of Goya's paintings, drawings and etchings from 1795 to 1819 ~ EMILY BOBROW

Goya in Times of War April 15th to July 13th, Prado, Madrid

EXHIBITIONS AT A GLANCE

- **The Whitney Biennial** (Whitney Museum, New York, March 6th to June 1st) Everyone moans about it—because it's such a big deal. After the drawing-heavy 2006 show, this one majors on mixed-media.
- **Street & Studio: An Urban History of Photography** (Tate Modern, London, May 22nd to August 31st). From street grit to studio gloss with Arbus, Beaton et al.
- **Saskia Olde Wolbers** (Mori Tower, Tokyo April 25th to July 13th). London-based rising star whose videos—abstract, unpeopled, yet vaguely familiar—are disconcertingly beautiful.
- **Traces of the Sacred in 20th Century Art** (Pompidou Centre, Paris, May 7th to August 11th) Edge past the crowds gawking at Damien Hirst and head for the pearly-grey impasto of "The Rose" by Jay DeFeo. It took eight years, it weighs a ton, and it's mesmerising.
- **Philip Guston: Works on Paper** (Morgan Library, New York, May 2nd to August 31st). Gloriously energetic drawings.
- **For Your Eyes Only** (Imperial War Museum, London, April 17th to March 1st 2009) Stretching the definition of war, the IWM marks Ian Fleming's centenary with a fusillade of Bond memorabilia ~ EB

TOP CHAIN CROSSES ATLANTIC

In these globalised times, you don't often find people complaining that a chain store has grown too slowly. But anyone who lives in Europe, likes clothes and criss-crosses the Atlantic has probably been heard wondering why on earth Banana Republic hasn't opened over here. It has only been supplying America with stylish threads since 1978. To add insult to injury, Banana Republic is owned by Gap, which has long had far more stores than its pedestrian designs deserve. Now, Banana Republic is finally landing in Britain, in a chunk of the old Dickins & Jones building on Regent Street—and bang opposite the Apple Store. The prices may not be as alluring as in America, but the men's shirts and sweaters and women's suits and LBDs will be the same: beautifully cut, solidly built, classic without being stuffy. It has its weak points—the men's suits are not as desirable as the women's, and the jeans are nothing special—but Banana Republic is so good at most things that some of its new neighbours will need to look to their laurels. Even the socks are a treat. ~ TIM DE LISLE

Banana Republic opens March 20th, 224 Regent Street, London W1

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A MONTH OF GREAT SONGS

Rock concerts tend to be just one damn song after another. Most of the stars doggedly follow the same template, dishing up 20 songs in no particular order—mainly greatest hits, with a sprinkling of new songs, and maybe an acoustic section in the middle. Now a few senior figures are finally finding fresh ways of slicing what is often an enormous pie. Sparks have come up with a typically bold innovation (see page 108), and Paul Simon, the most cosmopolitan of the great rock songwriters, is about to demonstrate his range with three geographically themed concerts in his native New York. One show is Latin, one African-Brazilian, and one north American, and they all feature old friends. For six nights, Simon performs "Songs from the Capeman", his unfairly maligned Broadway musical, plus other Latin-influenced tracks, with guests including the pianist Oscar Hernandez and the venerable doowop group Little Anthony and the Imperials. The week after, it's songs from "Graceland" in "Under African Skies", with Hugh Masekela on trumpet, plus "The Rhythm of the Saints", featuring another xenophile New Yorker, David Byrne. Simon, now 66, takes a ten-day break before returning with "American Tunes", rounding up songs from closer to home, including the golden years with Art Garfunkel, with guest spots from the vocal groups the Roches and Grizzly Bear. Mouthwatering stuff. ~ TIM DE LISLE

Paul Simon Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, April 1st to 27th. www.bam.org

GIGS AT A GLANCE

- **Robert Plant and Alison Krauss** (America, April 19th to 26th, Europe, May 5th to 22nd). Led Zeppelin can wait: their singer has a hit album to promote, and it's very good—slow, spare and romantic
- **Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band** (America, to April 30th and July 27th to 31st; Europe, May 22nd to July 20th). At London's O2 in December, they were in barnstorming form. These outdoor shows include the first concerts at Arsenal's Emirates Stadium (May 30th and 31st)
- **The Hives** (America, to March 8th, Europe, March 27th to April 20th) Swedish adrenaline, served neat
- **Feist** (Europe, May 20th to June 11th) Charming Canadian singer-songwriter, on a roll after winning America's Shortlist prize in February

ALBUMS AT A GLANCE

- **Coldplay** (Parlophone, circa May 19th) Their third album was a bit bland, the fourth is already looking more promising, as Brian Eno has come in as producer
- **Gnarls Barkley** (WEA, April) When an impassioned soul singer (Cee-Lo) met a clever producer (Danger Mouse) the consequence was a bestselling psychedelic soul album ("St Elsewhere") Now comes the follow-up, "The Odd Couple". ~ TDL

GTA IV HITS NEW YORK

Video-gaming's most controversial franchise is also, not coincidentally, one of the most lucrative. Rockstar Games, who make the bestselling "Grand Theft Auto", are masters of media manipulation, so the release of "GTA IV" is sure to make waves. Fans love "GTA" for its freeform gameplay: players drive, run and shoot their way through the ranks of the criminal underworld. Critics call it a "murder simulator" that teaches children to hijack cars and kill policemen. Politicians have expressed outrage that, by setting "GTA IV" in a beautifully rendered New York, Rockstar is tarnishing the city's good name (no violent films or cop shows are ever set there, you understand). "GTA IV" sports sharper graphics, improved controls and shorter load times. In a classic Rockstar touch, drinking beer makes the graphics go wobbly, just to provoke further outrage/publicity. Expect more posing from politicians, raves from actual gamers—and massive sales. ~ TOM STANDAGE

Grand Theft Auto IV Rockstar Games, April 29th

BIG WHEELS GROWING

Singapore's newest attraction, the Singapore Flyer, promises breathtaking panoramic views across to Malaysia and Indonesia. Big wheels have become a must-have city landmark, central to regeneration schemes from Berlin to Melbourne. Plans in Moscow and Las Vegas are on hold, but rumours abound of projects in Delhi, Dubai and Orlando. At 165 metres, the Flyer edges past China's 160-metre Star of Nanchang to take the title of the world's tallest observation wheel. And it is set to extend its reign as delays threaten the Great Beijing Wheel's intended place at the Olympic opening ceremony in August. Once open, Beijing's wheel will rule, carrying 1,920 passengers up 208 metres with, smog permitting, 100km-views stretching across the Olympic park and city skyline. For now, the Flyer holds the crown in an industry where bigger really does mean better. ~ CAROLINE CARTER

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A CLIMATOLOGIST WALKS INTO A BAR...

Saving the planet is a deadly serious business. ROBERT BUTLER detects a sense-of-humour failure

WHAT IS THE shortest book in the world? "The Environmentalists' Book of Jokes", of course. It's not a hard point to prove. Pick up the 550-page book "Man Walks into a Bar", which claims to be the biggest joke book you can buy, with more than 6,000 entries. The jokes are divided into more than 400 themes that run from accidents to zoos.

Look under C and the index goes from civil servants to cloning. (No mention of climate change.) Look under G and it goes from giraffes to golf. (No mention of global warming.) Look under E, and there's no earth or environment; look under P—no planet. This is our future: rivers dry up, sea-levels rise, animals become extinct—and there won't be a single blonde joke, or lightbulb joke, or three-men-walked-into-a-bar joke about any of it.

There could be half-a-dozen reasons for this dearth. The first is, climate change is too serious for humour. But "Man Walks into a Bar" has jokes about death, lepers and suicide. The second is, climate change is too boring. But there are jokes about accountancy. The third is, climate change is too preachy and earnest. That probably comes closest. The comedian Marcus Brigstocke travelled on a boat to the Arctic, with the novelist Vikram Seth and others, to see for himself what was happening (*Intelligent Life*, Autumn 2007, page 15). In the *Sunday Times*, Brigstocke admitted: "The environment is frankly dull, boring and worthy—not always a great source of comedy."

The American satirist and talk-show host Bill Maher says the environment is "one of the hardest subjects to do in comedy". He identifies a technical problem: "It doesn't have an obvious, easy, funny target." Climate change is tricky because it's "a slow-moving disaster".

Cartoonists have an easier job picking up on the incidentals. One *New Yorker* cover pictures a man on a tiny desert island with a single palm tree, surrounded by recycling bins. The changes in weather allow for plenty of comic reversals. Pugh, the pocket cartoonist of the *Times*, has a middle-aged man looking out of his suburban house, saying, "Next door's fish is in our garden again".

With parody, climate change fuses with other subjects. The American mock-newspaper the *Onion* treated autumn as television. The headline ran: "Fall cancelled after 3 billion seasons. A beloved classic comes to an end". The text said: "In recent years the Fall has been reduced from three months to a meagre two-week stint, and its scheduled start time has been pushed back later and later each year."

The most effective comedians adopt the indifferent attitudes of the polluters. Another American satirist and talk-show host, Stephen Colbert, interviewed the presenter of a CNN show called "Planet in Peril". Colbert asks, "Are you talking about Planet Earth?" ("Yes.") "Could that eventually affect Planet America?"

The comedian Will Ferrell plays George Bush, leaning against a fence on his ranch in Crawford, doing a broadcast about global warming. The folksy, reassuring patter has to go into overdrive to compensate for the president's very shaky grasp of the subject. Larry David, star of "Curb Your Enthusiasm" and co-creator of "Seinfeld", tells an audience that his conversion from "radical narcissist" to "radical environmentalist" was caused by one word he saw in a newspaper: tuna. Or rather three: mercury in tuna. Every day he used to have tuna for lunch, it was the one thing he never had to think about; now, he doesn't know what to order.

An "obvious, easy, funny target", to use Maher's phrase, is environmentalists themselves. The American comedian Sarah Silverman spoofs the apocalyptic tone of Al Gore's film "An Inconvenient Truth", reeling off a list of catastrophes that are about to happen, before pausing and adding, "I think it's awesome."

The most sustained joke about the environmentally conscious is the South Park episode "SmugAlert!", where the "smug" from all the hybrid-car owners in South Park begins to merge with the smug from hybrid-car owners in San Francisco. One character tries to point out that hybrids would be a good thing if people were prepared to drive them without being so self-satisfied about it, but everyone accepts that would be too much to ask—and people go back to driving their SUVs.

A second volume of "Man Walks into a Bar" brings together 550 more pages of jokes and one-liners. Not one of these is about climate change either. If the publishers ever plan a third edition, here's my modest contribution (someone has to get this thing started).

Q: How many climate sceptics does it take to change a lightbulb?
A: None. It's too early to say if the lightbulb needs changing. ■

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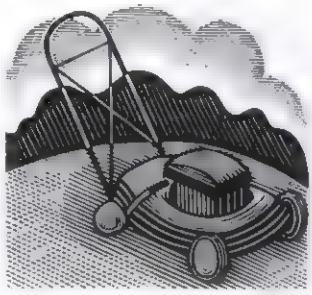
LANDSCAPES

The kindest cut

Have a field to spare? Get the mower out, and you can create a garden in a season. NIGEL SCOTT-HARDEN sharpens his blades

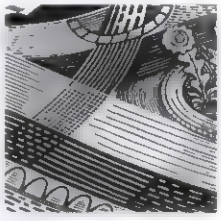
IF GARDENING IS about editing nature, then a mower is the landscaper's blue pencil. By cutting paths through any large area of rough grass—an abandoned paddock, say—you can quickly create order, movement and perspective. A garden, in other words.



For this to work, keen observation is vital. First you'll need to walk your land two or three times, in early spring. Go out in the hour before sunset, when the light is low and details leap out. Take a rug to sit on, and a glass of wine for thinking. Look, then look again, and use bamboo sticks to mark anything that catches your eye: "weeds" such as rushes, perhaps, or a fledgling flag iris. Mark any areas that seem to be damp, or where the grass is not growing so well.

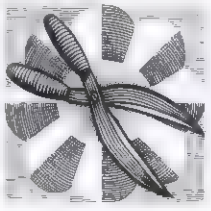
Begin to edit. Mow twice before mid-April, the first time trimming the whole area with the mower's blades set at their highest. On the second outing, with the blades halfway down, leave generous islands of uncut grass around your stakes, to act as the bones of the design.

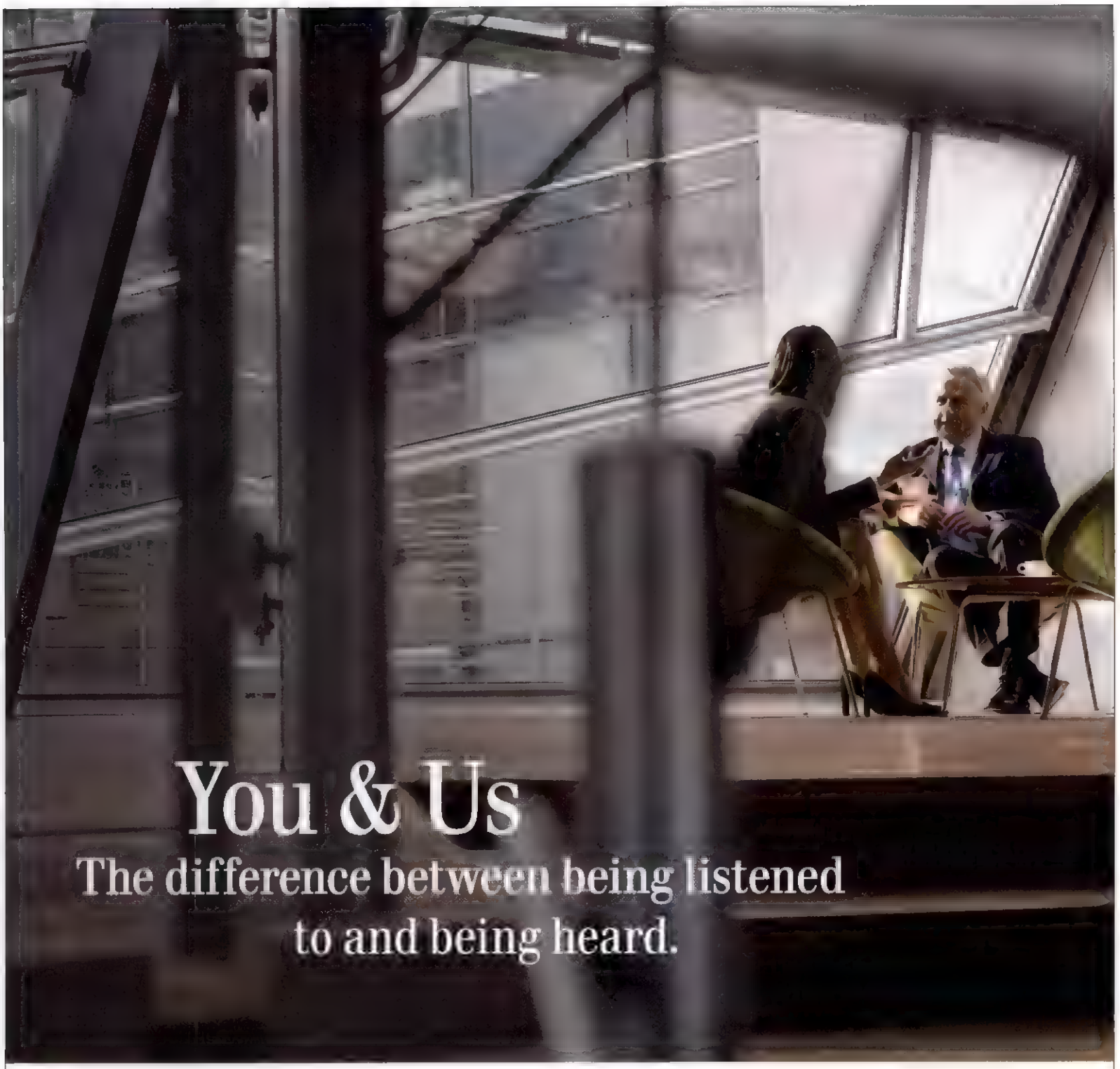
Two weeks after the second cut, take your mower for an amble, blades set to low. Look for distant focal points: a valley, a steeple, an oak—anything beyond your garden can become part of it. Aim for one such point, then steadily, and without any hesitation, let the mower take you, snaking steadily and without hesitation, through the grass, avoiding the uncut areas around the bamboo sticks. Take whatever route feels right—but remember that a path should never be completely straight. And here's a funny thing: paths that start by veering to the right feel kinder than those that start with a curve to the left.



Once you're done, go back over your route, using the mower to chip away alternately at the edges, emphasising the curves, and widening the mouth of the path to lead the eye in. Don't go mad—any more than 4ft wide and it will look like a road and lose its romance. Then add perhaps a tributary path or two, and island beds for intrigue. Think Ying and Yang with these, to achieve balance rather than yawning symmetry.

You could, later, naturalise some bulbs in the long grass, or plant a tree or shrub to key a particular curve—to give it a reason for being. But frankly, it should be enough simply to maintain your paths—half an hour, with blades set low, whenever you feel a mow coming on. Trim the rough areas by six inches in late July (by then any wild flowers will have seeded), and there you have it—a garden. Nature, edited.





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ROBIN HOOD AND THE ARK

Black-tie philanthropy is part charity, but MATTHEW BISHOP has spotted rivalry, too

How much will dinner with Mikhail Gorbachev cost in this year of economic gloom? Or dancing lessons from Richard Gere? Or the chance to hold a series of dinner parties dished up by famous chefs? The slowdown will provide the first real test of today's new generation of philanthropists, especially the ones who made their pile in the financial markets. All eyes will be on two annual black-tie auctions for hedge-fund philanthropists, one in London, the other in New York.

The two lavish galas, which in the past have auctioned off a game of tennis with Tony Blair, a debrief with James Bond (or rather on set with Daniel Craig), and ten "power meals" with financial kingpins have struck up a friendly rivalry—a transatlantic giving contest. In late spring London's financial tycoons will again throw down the gauntlet at the dinner for Absolute Return for Kids (ARK), a charity founded in 2002 by the Swiss hedge-fund tycoon Arpad Busson. He got the idea from his rival, the event in New York hosted by the Robin Hood Foundation, founded in 1988 by Paul Tudor Jones, Busson's old boss.

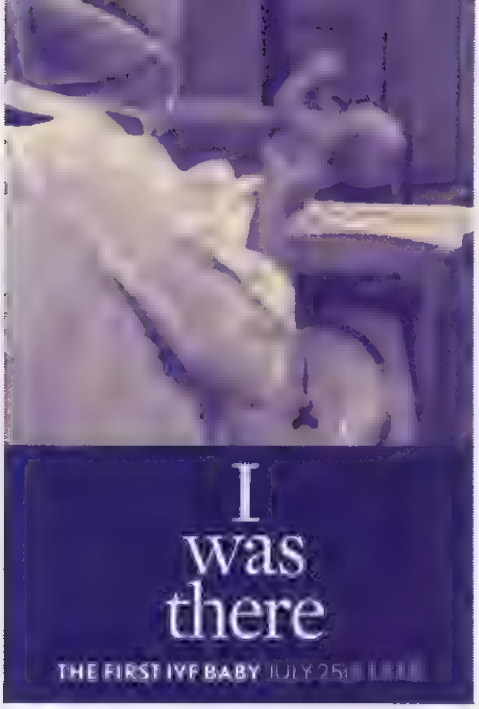
Black-tie giving is sometimes seen as the unacceptable face of philanthropy. All that champagne and white truffle; all those pushy donors basking in conspicuous wealth and good works. Last year, in *Portfolio* magazine, the novelist Tom Wolfe wrote a savage account of the Robin Hood auction, accusing Tudor Jones of having a "status fixation" requiring "total control—by *me*".

This year's auctions come just when many people are worried about their prospects, so they may attract more critical journalism than ever. This is despite the charities' record in raising hundreds of millions of dollars for good causes—poverty in New York; orphans and other needy children at ARK. The charities put a lot of effort into ensuring that the money is well spent, and Busson and Tudor Jones both believe that the peer pressure of the galas persuades many a hedge-fund tycoon to prise open his wallet.

But this year there is dilemma. Give too much and the gala dinners will be seen as evidence that hedge-funders have sailed through a financial crisis that has hit everyone else. The dinners could become lightning-rods for public discontent. They may even attract protests, as at last year's dinner by Britain's new Private Equity Foundation, its first do.

On the other hand, if the financiers give less than last year, they may well be accused of being fair-weather philanthropists who have abandoned the needy at the first threat to the chalet in St Moritz.

The smart money is on new records being set yet again on both sides of the Atlantic, if only because of peer pressure. But there is not just the fear of being branded as stingy—it is more existential than that. After a rough time in the markets, people are bound to spend much of the evening speculating about who on the next table has taken a beating. What better way to signal that it wasn't you than by bidding even more than last year for the chance to treat Gorbie to the finest tasting-menu in town? ■



Dr Finlay Campbell, then a 43-year-old anaesthetist, remembers the birth of Louise Brown *(above)* at Manchester's Oldham & District General Hospital

"My generation trained in the 1950s: if there was work to be done, you did it. So while 'volunteering' for Patrick Steptoe's IVF team is one way of putting it, perhaps 'press ganged' would be more like it. But it was great research: it was the culmination of Bob Edwards's Cambridge studies, while Patrick was virtually first in his field of laparoscopy. They were two brilliant doctors, and were both very committed, working out of hours, taking over theatres. It was their obsession. Though I have to say at times the work felt more of a nuisance to me than anything else—my main interest then was relieving pain in inoperable cancers and so on.

"I remember the press interest well: the journalists were an absolute nuisance. The hospital did its best to keep them at bay, but they were camped out in the grounds of the hospital. Some even went on to the ward pretending to be visitors: pretty shocking.

"On the night of the 25th, I got the summons at about 10pm to come to theatre for the Caesarean section. When I went into the anaesthetic room I found a film crew setting up lights. I ejected them immediately. I wasn't having any of that nonsense.

"After that, there were no difficulties: within 15 minutes of the mother arriving in theatre, Louise was born. Afterwards, I had a drink with one of the junior gynaecologists, and then I got on with things. Looking back, it was an important event in medical history—a step forward for gynaecologists and couples having difficulty conceiving—but at the time, I felt on the periphery. I never imagined IVF would become such a big business."

intelligentlife@economist.com

STOP AND STARE
CARBON CERAMIC BRAKES
ON FERRARI'S 612 SCAGLIETTI

SCREECH

Ferrari is putting carbon-ceramic brakes in all its cars. PAUL MARKILLIE goes from 160kph to zero in four seconds

AT A FAST corner the passenger and the driver feel different things. As the driver, you can sense the car's limits, while the passenger can only hang on tight. When the Ferrari approaches a corner with its 12 cylinders still growling, the passenger's knuckles turn white. The corner races closer and the passenger's right foot is pushing hard at a non-existent pedal. But still the power is surging. You will never take the car round. Then, with your chest pressed into the seatbelts, the speed vanishes. The car turns without fuss and roars away on another straight. These are the sexiest brakes in the world.

The first question everyone asks about a super car is: how fast will it go? This Ferrari 612 Scaglietti, Grand Tourer of the marque, can zoom along at over 300kph (186mph). From a standing start, it will reach 100kph in just over four seconds. But it's a Ferrari, so of course its performance is breathtaking. The more intriguing question is one for the motoring cognoscenti: how fast will it stop?

Even more quickly. Four seconds is about all it takes to bring this car to a halt from 160kph. This stopping power is thanks to the 612's carbon-ceramic brakes. They were developed for racing, where the fractions of a second from braking later for corners add up, lap after lap, until they make the difference between winning or losing.

> The fractions of a second from braking later add up, lap after lap, until they decide between winning and losing

Carbon-ceramic brakes are now appearing on high-performance cars, like Lamborghinis, Aston Martins and the best Audis and Mercedes. They usually cost extra: £5,800 (€7,800) more if fitted to a Porsche 911 Turbo. Ferrari, which found that eight out of ten of its customers wanted them, has decided that from this year it will become the first maker to fit them as standard on all its models.

As cars have got more powerful, their braking performance has had to improve. Carbon-ceramic brakes will slowly make the journey from super cars to luxury, and all the way down to the Renault Clio. This is because not only do they excel at the main job of stopping a car, they also help in other ways too.

Sucking out the kinetic energy of a speeding chunk of metal puts tremendous strain on brake discs. As the brakes absorb energy, they get hot, which can make them "fade" and lose efficiency. Carbon-ceramics are highly resistant to heat and do not wear out fast. If you use them instead of the friction material and steel in normal brakes, they will not fade. Manufacturers are still learning how long the brakes will last, but it could be ten times longer than steel discs, which may need replacing every few years.

The new brakes are about 40% lighter, too. The discs are made from a tough ceramic called silicon carbide, which is embedded in a carbon-fibre composite. The pads are made from a similar material. Pick up a carbon-ceramic brake disc from a Ferrari and it's a featherweight compared with its steel counterpart. Because the cut in weight takes place low down, it makes the car handle better. And the brake callipers, although bigger, are made of aluminium. Those on the Ferrari are hewn from a solid block of the stuff, to help absorb heat and energy.

And don't forget looks. The fashion for spoked wheels means that more of a car's braking system is now visible. But if it is damp, steel discs can quickly show signs of rust, especially if a car has not been driven—even for as little as a day. Many owners moan long and hard on internet user groups about rusty discs. Carbon-ceramic brakes don't rust.

To set off their brakes, some owners now order coloured brake callipers. Red and yellow are popular. Seen through the spokes of a wheel they make brakes look beefy. But don't be fooled into thinking this means the brakes are carbon-ceramic. Shops sell little pots of paint for boy racers to paint their callipers. Only if the brake disc has a dark, matt look is it likely to be the real thing. Otherwise, when that corner comes, hold on tight. ■

FERRARI S.P.A.

Eight designers, eight one-off pieces: proof that haute couture counts

PHOTOGRAPHERS **DANIELE DUELLA & IANGO HENZI** STYLIST **MARY FELLOWES** WORDS **SARAH MOWER**

It is a marvel that Parisian haute couture is still with us. Obituaries of this creative Olympics have been written since the early 1970s, while the number of functioning houses has dwindled to a handful since couture's 1950s heyday, when leisured heiresses would book a passage to Paris, for wardrobe fittings that would cover every day-to-evening eventuality. Poiret, Vionnet, Balenciaga and Madame Grès are long gone; Yves Saint Laurent and Emanuel Ungaro no longer offer couture; and after 45 years, the Roman maestro Valentino (who dressed Jackie Onassis and the Duchess of Windsor, among others), hung up his cutting shears this spring. ❖ Yet against all odds, this tiny, specialist area is enjoying an unexpected resurgence, taking orders from women who actually pay—unlike celebrities, who only borrow their red-carpet dresses. "When I opened my couture salon ten years ago, I honestly thought the customers were either dead or dying," Jean-Paul Gaultier told me in January, as he was putting the finishing touches to his "Little Mermaid" collection for spring. "I only did it as a challenge to see how high I could reach—because couture is the ultimate achievement. But now there are all these new clients. We're working all the time, and I love it—it's a licence to create." ❖ At Chanel, Karl Lagerfeld has presided over the house for 25 years. "There's a new clientele now—Russian, Middle Eastern, Chinese, South American—and they're young," he said, while preparing his spring couture show of short-skirted suits and dresses, inspired by the spiralling shape of shells and frondy forms of underwater flora. ❖ Though both Gaultier and Lagerfeld hit on the same watery theme for spring, what connoisseurs look for in couture is something beyond regular, shop-bound ready-to-wear. They want intensely original, distinctive one-offs: a suit that fits like a glove from Armani Privé, an extravagant ballgown by Atelier Versace (the ready-to-wear house that shows couture on static models, rather than the runway), or a fantasy wedding-dress by Christian Lacroix. ❖ If the volume of demand for couture can't compare with its golden, mid-century years, it is, at least, a straw in the wind. It has also allowed room for expansion for at least one designer: Riccardo Tisci, the 33-year-old Italian who has brought Givenchy couture back to life. This season, his collection was dedicated to the "Gothic ballerina"—all tightly fitted doublet jackets (very Rudolf Nureyev) and multi-petalled dance skirts. The collection has nothing to do with the heritage of the house (Audrey Hepburn, "Breakfast at Tiffany's") and yet young women are bombarding him with requests for his clothes. It's a healthy sign. To get trapped into too much reverence for the past is stultifying for any brand. In that respect, the spring collections offered a hope for the future that haute couture hasn't seen in 20 years. Here's to it.

ARMANI PRIVÉ

A silk plissé evening dress slimmers between natural forms and architecture

Panier (worn as cape), shoes and gloves all to hire from Angels

GIVENCHY

A cropped, sheer black tulle trench worn over a layered silk mini-dress together articulate Ricardo Tisci's idea of the "Gothic Ballerina"

Stripe gloves, Glovedup; skull-print tights, Jonathan Aston; veiled mask, Basso & Brooke; hat and crinoline, to hire from Angels

JEAN-PAUL GAULTIER

The cone bra returns, in mother-of-pearl, as part of the finale "mermaid" dress in Gaultier's aquatic-themed show

Tailored, Holly Of Here

CHRISTIAN DIOR

John Galliano's degradé, violet and black duchesse satin bubble-back suit–a play on the Pierre Cardin silhouette of the 1960s

Oversize black hat, cutaway platform shoes, both Dior; polka-dot tights, Jonathan Aston.

CHANEL
Karl Lagerfeld's intricate, silver-sequinned mini-dress
Panier and hat, both to hire from Angels; tulle and jersey fingerless gloves, Glovedup; text-print tights, stylist's own
Titulaire
PARIS (XI)

ATELIER VERSACE

Like an early Avedon, lengths of pink silk gazar cascade down Versace's waterfall-backed evening dress

Tulle bustle panel and panniers, worn as cape, to hire from Angels; stripe gloves, Glovedup.

CHRISTIAN LACROIX

Pure theatre: marabou feathers add a savage edge to Lacroix's voluminous, abstract-print coat

Metallic leggings, American Apparel; black ankle- boots, Scorah Pattullo; bearskin, to hire from Angels

VALENTINO

Scattered pearls appear to float on the froth of a café-au-lait tulle evening dress, from Valentino's final collection

Silver satin ribbon-loop cape, Roland Mouret; veiled mask, Basso & Brooke; cap-toe ankle-boots, Manolo Blahnik; vintage gloves, stylist's own

Hair [illegible] **Make-up** [illegible] Artist
Model [illegible]
Production [illegible]

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Independent minds

GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER

WHEN IN 1966, Yves Saint Laurent introduced the first tuxedo for women—the redolently named Le Smoking—it was wildly controversial. So much so that the socialite New Yorker Nan Kempner, wearing a YSL tux, couldn't get past the doorman of La Côte Basque, a smart Manhattan restaurant with a "no women in trousers" rule. Kempner whipped off her trousers and, wearing the jacket as an impromptu mini-dress, walked into the restaurant—and into history.

There was always something spicily taboo about a woman in a tux. It was, after all, the very summit of menswear, boasting the incontestably masculine strength of a uniform alongside a tailored elegance that erased imperfections. Its monochromatic purity was the height of sophistication, transforming Everyman into 007. When Slim Aarons photographed Clark Gable, Gary Cooper, James Stewart and Van Heflin celebrating the new year in Beverly Hills in 1957, the title he gave his tux-clad subjects said it all: "Kings of Hollywood". By that stage, the stars may have been lions in the winter of their years, but their image remains a symbol of unambiguous manhood.

So what does a man make of a woman in a tuxedo? As Nan Kempner learned, there was once a whole lot of powder in that keg. Marlene Dietrich was one of the first to light the fuse. She donned a tuxedo for a scene in the Josef von Sternberg movie "Morocco" (1930) teasing out her own transgressive, male-drag subtext to its limit when, playing a cabaret singer, she kissed a girl in the audience. Two years on, she sported white tie and tails in "Blonde Venus". Later still, the singer performed her stage shows in a tuxedo, because, she said, "the best songs are written for men."

You might find some small irony in the fact that a woman who championed personal freedom her entire life needed to disguise her gender to sing the songs she liked. But I'm not buying it. Dietrich was a *provocatrice* who thrived on ambiguity, and nothing made that clearer than her affection for men's clothes. Still, her equation of a man's tux with a sense of liberation did anticipate the future.

The same notion was even more congruous by the time Le Smoking was launched. Saint Laurent wanted to empower women by feminising the most emblematic menswear items, so perhaps unsurprisingly the women who became most

associated with the tuxedo were style arbiters: actresses such as Charlotte Rampling and Romy Schneider, whose defiance of convention infused every element of their lives, from the parts they played, to their relationships and the clothes they wore.

Who should wear a tux now? Someone who considers himself a connoisseur of the look is Carlo Brandelli, the creative director of the bespoke tailor Kilgour -on London's Savile Row, where the first short dinner-jacket was made, for the Prince of Wales in 1860. When Kilgour gets orders for a woman's tux, Brandelli says, "they come from a very select group: tall, chic, sexy women."

That sets the bar pretty high for anyone today who wants to follow in Romy's or Marlene's footsteps. Which is, of course, why a particular kind of woman is going to do exactly that. And I would suggest that they go right ahead and grasp that nettle. In fact, I would endorse the tuxedo as the ultimate dressing-up option of the 21st century, for its intelligence, its purity and its ability--ultimately--to transcend gender. The future's black and white. ■

HOW TO WEAR IT: THE MODERN TUX
All you need to carry off a tuxedo is confidence and the right cut—and there are plenty to choose from. Take the current ready-to-wear collections. At Lanvin, Alber Elbaz's black tux pays homage to Beau Brummel, with a square pared-back cut and light wool fabric that successfully balances classic with modern. Chloé's youthful, feminine version, meanwhile, pairs well with sheer or embellished fabrics, its sharp vertical lines framing the wearer and adding a sartorial full-stop to any outfit. Perhaps most desirable, though, is Stefano Pilati's redefinition of Le Smoking at Yves Saint Laurent. Tight, but wide, pagoda shoulders, cinched waist and skilful cutting combine to create a powerful silhouette. A new classic.

Another route is to buy an original man's dinner-jacket. David Saxby, of the British vintage menswear outfitters Old Hat, [illegible] the most suitable for the female torso.

Chloé www.chloe.com
[illegible]
Old Hat +44 (0)20 7610 6558
YSL www.ysl.com

FLAIR FASHION

DRESS SENSE

Shocking pink

The leading milliner Philip Treacy explains why brights light up his life

You use a lot of vivid colours in your work. Do you have a favourite?
That whole neon colour palette is so vibrant, it makes you feel alive. I particularly love proper, shocking Schiaperelli pink, one with a lot of blue in it. But I also like a Piccadilly Circus, fluorescent lime-green in a hat; worn on either blonde or black hair, it doesn't matter.

Don't such colours only suit some people?
No, anyone can wear them, no matter what their colouring. Neons are transforming. Wear a shocking pink hat with a plain black dress, for instance, and you utterly change the whole outfit.

Can anyone wear a hat, then?
Yes! Saying "I'm not a hat person" is nonsense! Would you say, "I'm not a clothes person"? No. Everyone can wear hats. Wearing a beautiful hat just adds a little extra kick to your day, it gives you more confidence.

Would you say that the brighter coloured the hat, the more confidence it gives?
Not necessarily. But people should be more open to colour. A black hat is not the whole story. I mean, I'm kind of like Elvis: everybody loves Elvis Presley, everybody loves black hats. And a black hat will look good. But then again, a fluorescent green hat could look even better.

Should bright pink be confined to accessories?
No. Years ago, I shared a flat with the model Susie Bick. She went to a pink specialist—yes, there is such a thing—to have a special pink paint mixed for our kitchen. I loved the way it looked different in every light, and when I designed a hotel in Ireland a couple of years ago, I painted some of the interiors shocking pink. We don't all have to live in a white room, or wear a black hat.

GROUND FLOOR, GIMMICKRY

Retailers are always searching for new ways to get customers through the door. But history shows, says **Francesca Martin**, that their bag of tricks hasn't changed as much as you might expect

DUE 2009

The Dubai Mall, the world's largest, will fill 1.12m square metres with more than 1,200 stores, a huge aquarium, an Olympic-sized ice rink—and a waterfall

2000

Natalie Massenet, the former fashion editor, launches www.net-a-porter.com It quickly becomes the main online destination for designer fashion

1921

Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel creates Chanel No 5 perfume, followed by the little black dress, the tweed suit and the quilted bag

THE OTHER DAY, a leading British fashion editor told me a guilty secret. One of the main reasons, she said, that she spends at least £800 on a new designer bag every season, is to appease disapproving sales assistants: that way, she knows they'll be nice to her. How very canny luxury retailers are. They subtly belittle us—and we spend small fortunes to stop them doing so.

Welcoming only shoppers who buy, rather than just browse, is not a modern concept—in Britain, it was common practice in clothes stores until the beginning of the 19th century. In many ways, the tricks retailers use to keep us spending have hardly changed since. There have always been two ways to make a customer feel you're special: you show them a good time, or give them a hard time.

Showing them a good time—making shopping a mass leisure activity—began as the growth of empire pumped profit into the wallets of the 19th-century European middle classes. But it wasn't until 1909, when the American Harry Selfridge opened his department store on London's Oxford Street, that the theatre of retail was born. Selfridge liked to call his store the "third-biggest tourist attraction in town"—after Westminster Abbey and the Tower of London. It had the first dedicated perfume and cosmetics hall, and used in-store promotions, fashion shows, extravagant window-dressing, and wildly expensive displays of wealth to attract customers: in May 1937, Harry Selfridge spent the then huge sum of £50,000 adorning the store's facade for the coronation of King George VI. Just over 60 years later, the store commissioned the artist Sam Taylor Wood to wrap its exterior in a 900ft-long photograph of celebrities—the lesson that spectacle equals shoppers has not been forgotten.

These days even shopping malls fight to provide spectacle on tap—Madrid's Mall Xanadu features its own 250-metre ski-run. Size, spectacle and ski slopes aren't always enough to lure in the 21st-century shopper, though. The next step seems to be the whole-brand experience. At the 10-storey Chanel Tower in

9 784258 697236

...STRATION MATTHEW RICHARDSON

1909
A reported 150,000 people visit Selfridges in London to see Louis Blèriot's aircraft, the first to fly across the Channel

1904
Michael Marks and Tom Spencer open shop in Leeds. M&S later makes its reputation by offering full refunds as long as a receipt is shown

1858 Charles Frederick Worth launches the first haute couture house, at 7 Rue de la Paix, Paris, showing his creations on live models

Tokyo—its façade quilted, Chanel-style, in black glass and steel—customers eat in the top-floor Beige Tokyo restaurant, a collaboration with the Michelin-starred chef, Alain Ducasse. Louis Vuitton's store on the Champs Elysées in Paris mixes handbags with high art: it has a gallery above the shop, showing work by the likes of Zaha Hadid and James Turrell. Back in Tokyo, Armani's new Ginza Tower contains 12 floors of Armani goods and services, from interiors to restaurant to spa. And, following in the footsteps of Versace's Palazza Hotel on Australia's Gold Coast, from 2009 you can live the Armani brand either by staying at Dubai's new Armani Hotel or buying one of the emirate's new Armani-designed flats.

Even such a traditional brand as Dunhill is going down the all-you-can-eat route. This summer, the 115-year-old British company will open its Dunhill Club, within the renovated Georgian confines of Bourdon House in Mayfair, London. As well as an actual Dunhill shop, this will offer customers a barber, humidor, cinema, spa, restaurant, bespoke tailoring, and a members' club with four hotel rooms. According to Julian Diment, Dunhill's marketing director, this is a response to the dully international nature of much modern shopping. "People are tired of walking into a shop anywhere in the world and finding exactly the same environment," he says. "[We want] Dunhill customers to find something reflective of the local culture, whether in Shanghai, Tokyo, Paris or London." Certainly, buying the same products in Hong Kong, London or Berlin makes the world seem smaller, and the shop less alluring.

Some luxury retailers are going the other way. Instead of encompassing the consumer with their brand, they make it smaller and harder to find with "guerrilla" outlets—short-term, blink-and-you'll-miss-them shops. The British label Mulberry, for example, opened a guerrilla shop during last autumn's London Fashion Week, stocking limited-edition bags, clothing and even cupcakes designed by the artist Julie Verhoeven. Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons, meanwhile, has been funding guerrilla stores since February 2004—the most recent opened in Warsaw last autumn. Each stays open for only a year, and advertising is limited to poster and word-of-mouth. They have earned the label a cult status among younger consumers.

Whether any of these strategies can keep luxury retail booming, only time—and, potentially, a global recession—will tell. In January, I visited Dover Street Market in Mayfair, London. A kind of alternative department store, it recreates the atmosphere of an edgy street market over six floors filled with a dynamic, well edited collection of fashion and jewellery, and was described as the "retail concept of the future" when it opened in 2004. When I was there, however, there were just two other visitors; the only sound, apart from the echo of my footsteps on the grey concrete floor, was the chatter of the Japanese shop assistants over the low hum of music. And the changing room—an oversized, gilded birdcage draped with heavy red-velvet curtains—lay empty: a sign, perhaps, that customers have already flown the coop. Luxury retailers should perhaps consider the fate of the great Harry Selfridge: despite all the showmanship and grand schemes, he died, virtually penniless, in a small flat in a drab London suburb. Shopping can indeed be a precarious business. ■

GLOBAL TRADING

Flea markets

Five outdoor sites for a spring bargain

SAN TELMO BUENOS AIRES

Based in an energetic, arty neighbourhood just south of downtown, Buenos Aires' signature Sunday flea market *(left)* specialises in antiques—art-deco wardrobes are particularly popular. But the merchandise runs the gamut, from the traditional *fileteado*-style signs so emblematic of the city, to modern bohemian clothing. Come early and be prepared to haggle—but even if you leave empty-handed, it's worth the trip to hear classical music played by youthful street orchestras. ~ DAN ROSENHECK

Corner of Calle Defensa and Humberto I, Buenos Aires, www.feriadesantelmo.com Sunday, 10am–5pm

SUNBURY ANTIQUES MARKET MIDDLESEX

Many British dealers source their goods from Sunbury's vast range of beautiful French furniture (from Georgian to contemporary), antique toys, comics, prints and oil paintings. The stallholders *(above)* are an attraction in themselves, with more characters than you can shake an ormolu candlestick at. But not all will deliver, so take a car with a large boot. ~ HELENA SMITH

Kempton Park Racecourse, Middlesex; www.kemptonantiques.com. Second and final Tuesday of each month, 6.30am–2pm

A, AMY GERARD; OPPOSITE, HELENA SMITH; TRAINING SHOE, GETTY IMAGES

HELL'S KITCHEN NEW YORK
Devotees who mourn Chelsea market—displaced a few years back by an apartment block—now rummage in Hell's Kitchen *(left)*, browsing through racks of vintage flapper dresses, piles of rare books, bags, belts, and jewellery from chunky African beads to delicate brooches. "I love it out here," says Peter, a stallholder presiding over a stack of curios, which include an Edison cylinder-player and a dinosaur egg
~ EMILY BOBROW
39th St, between 9th and 10th Aves, New York, hellskitchenflearnarket.com Saturday and Sunday, all day

ROSE BOWL CALIFORNIA
Once a month, some 2,500 vendors form a mini-city around Pasadena's football stadium. Stalls *(left)* divide into three: new items (handmade candles, woollen tea-cosies), collectables (early daguerreotypes, 1930s lunchboxes), and used clothing (Nike Air Force Ones, vintage Levi's). Dedicated foragers arrive at 5am, and don't mind paying $20 entry for an early-bird pick of the goods. ~ SARA WILSON
Rose Bowl Drive, Pasadena, CA; www.rgcshows.com. Second Sunday in the month.

PORTE DE VANVES PARIS
Hugging two sides of a sports ground in the residential 14th arrondissement, low-key Vanves *(left)* is a bijou, antiques-only alternative to Paris's vast Clignancourt market to the north. Under a canopy of acacia trees, 380 covered stalls are stacked bough-high with bric-a-brac. It's a vibrant, friendly place to browse and chat, particularly if you're after homeware: a crystal decanter, silver coffee-pot or Champagne bucket, or antique embroidered sheets and pillow cases in heavy white linen and cotton. Look out for African wood-carvings and beautifully bound rare books—such as an 1861 Norvin's "History of Napoleon" for €180. ~ SARAH DALLAS
Aves Marc Sangnier and Georges Lafenestre, Paris 75014, www.pucesdevanves.typepad.com. Saturday and Sunday, 7am-1pm.

Edited by Sarah Dallas
www.economist.com/cities

INSIDER TRADING

Training shoes

Dan Salcedo, head coach of the British men's triathlon team, on how to keep feet sweet

You can't buy the right shoe without knowing what sort of foot you have. To find out, walk with bare, wet feet on a dry surface, and then look at your footprint. Most prints have a definite arch in the middle, with the heel and toe print connected on one side. This kind of foot needs what's known as a "stability" shoe, with a medium level of support.

A flat foot shows very little arching: there will be a line connecting toes and heel on both sides of the print. Such feet are very likely to over-pronate (collapse inwards as you run), so will need stiffer, motion-control shoes. A few people have a very high arch, where the footprint shows an uninterrupted gap between heel and ball. They're unlikely to pronate, and will need what's known as a cushioned shoe.

To tell which is which, pick up the shoe. The more stability it offers, the heavier and less flexible it will be. A motion-control shoe will have a pronounced curve to its last (the line of the shoe from heel to toe), while the last of a cushioned shoe will be virtually straight.

The different brands are all much of a muchness, but you're likely to find that one will suit your feet better than the others—New Balance, for example, does width fittings. As most companies sell the same, slightly revamped models year after year, once you find a shoe that suits, stick to it. Just be sure to buy half a size to a size bigger than your foot size, to avoid blistering, and get new shoes about every 600 miles or so.

Specialist running shops are the best places to go, as they may have treadmills or offer help with gait analysis. But wherever you choose, try to find an assistant who looks like a runner. If they're passionate about their running, they'll be able to help with yours.

INTERVIEW BY ISABEL LLOYD

ADDRESS BOOK
British Triathlon PO Box 25, Loughborough, Leics, www.britishtriathlon.org Tel: +44 (0)1509 226161.
JackRabbit 42 West 14th Street, New York 10011, and branches, www.jackrabbitsports.com.
Long Distance Altonaer Strasse 5-7, 10557 Berlin; www.longdistance.de. Tel +49 (0)30 36 40 99 64.
Runners Need 34 Parkway, London NW1, and branches, www.runnersneed.co.uk.
Tortoise and the Hare Unit 6, Smithbrook Kilns, Horsham Road, Cranleigh, Surrey; www.tortoise-and-the-hare.co.uk Tel: +44 (0)1483 273372.

ISABELLA ROSSELLINI AND DAUGHTER ELETTRA WIEDEMANN ABOARD SILVER WHISPER

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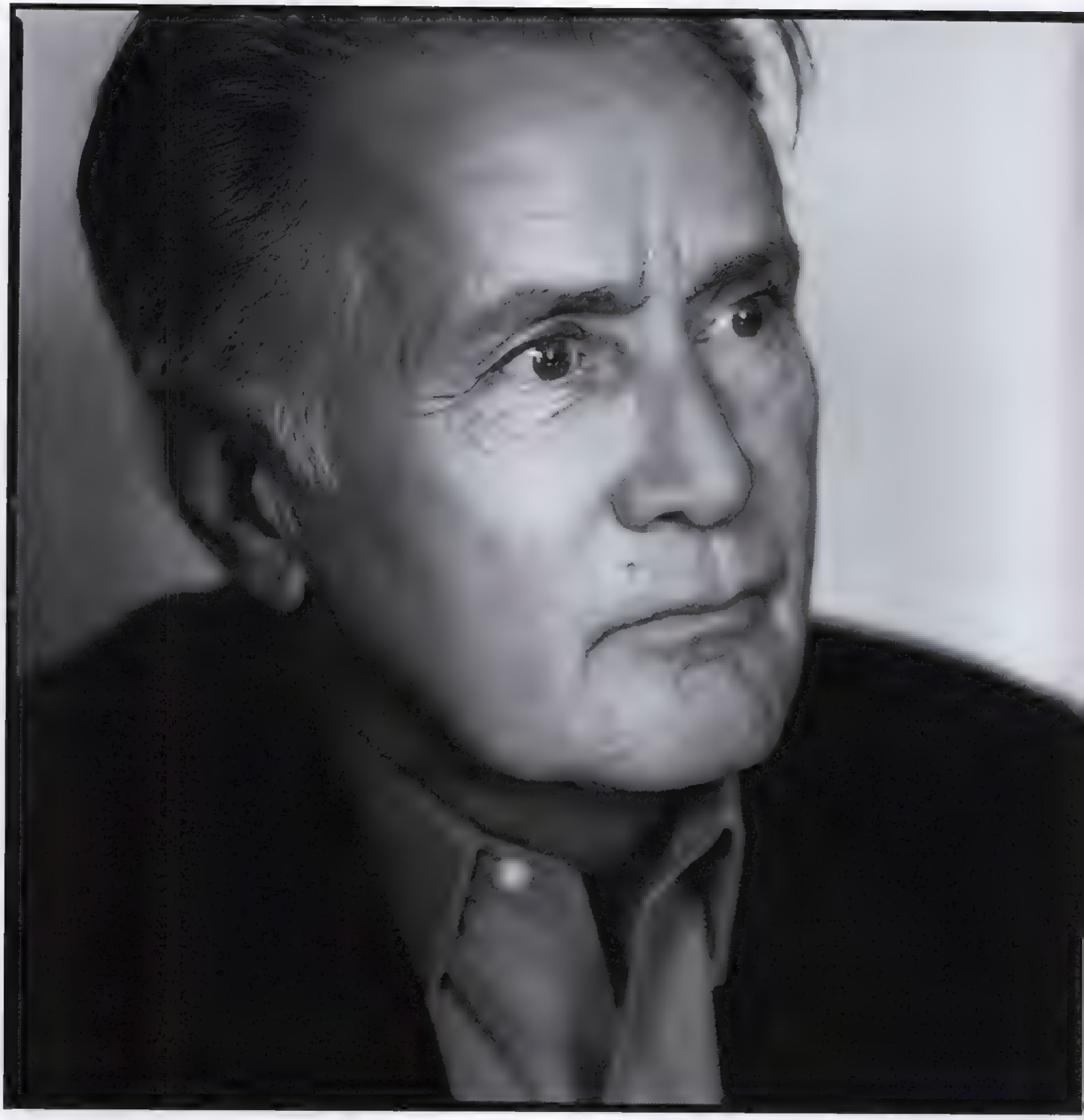
[illegible] nannies lavished this warm[illegible] [illegible]burnt, bruised or generally [illegible], it doubled as an all-purpose [illegible] cream, "PD" covered every contin[illegible] [illegible] and Butler's blue and cream pots [illegible] recipe is back in full-time production, its [illegible] redolent of childhood comforts. Sturdier than [illegible] Night Hour Cream, more soothing than Vaseline, it de[illegible] [illegible] every home, Nanny still knows best. – MARY FELLOWES

[illegible] 30ml at selected branches of Cath Kidston, or mail-order from Luckings Farm, Magpie Lane, Coleshill, Bucks; www.pommade-divine.com. Tel: +44 (0)1494 721290

BUTLER'S POMMADE DIVINE PARIS [illegible] PHOTOGRAPH DAMIEN BLOTTIERE [illegible] LLOWE



When he entered the hotel where we are lunching the staff fell back, yet kept a close guard on him—as if they were his security detail

The elder statesman

There is no one in America more presidential than Martin Sheen. So who better to discuss the 2008 race for the White House? He talks to DAVID THOMSON about politics, rebelliousness, working with Brando, and why he doesn't see himself as a star

PORTRAITS BRIGITTE LACOMBE
LOS ANGELES JANUARY 2008

FOR MARTIN SHEEN one small rudeness is a badge of honour. "You see," he says, "the extraordinary thing is how closely 'The West Wing' overlapped with the administration of George Bush. And every now and then, the whole crew on the show would go to Washington to shoot some exteriors and get the snow on the ground. Well, Andy Card was Bush's chief of staff then and when we were in town invitations came out from him so that each person on the show could get to meet the equivalent person in the White House. Except for me! That man would not give me the time of day because he knew I had a history as a radical!"

President Jeb Bartlett (over 150 episodes of "The West Wing" at 42 minutes a show) and I had lunch in Los Angeles on the day of the New Hampshire primary. Sheen had already done a little campaigning for Bill Richardson, the governor of New Mexico. Richardson dropped out a day after Hillary Clinton's surprise win over Barack Obama in New Hampshire, but Sheen knows politics is a game played slowly. "We've had a season of surprises already with Obama coming out of nowhere, and Hillary faltering, but in the long run I have a feeling it might be Obama and Richardson as the ticket. I like that, I think Obama's a good and decent man."

Which brings me to the second main point that we might as well establish at the outset: the estimate that Sheen has of the present incumbent at the White House. Paragraph break. Big close-up of Sheen's boyish face—at 67 he still has the fire of a kid.

"He's arrogant. He's ignorant. He's a bully. He's not a politician. He's the sort of person who'll pick a fight with someone because he can whup 'em. That's what he did in Iraq. He conned the military—and it's to their shame—to further a political agenda. And we have lost respect and power in the world, beyond partisanship.

"You see 'The West Wing' seemed clear-cut in that Bartlett was based on Kennedy, Carter and Clinton. His was a Democratic administration. But there were lots of Republicans on the show, too, and they believed in it because their reverence for the White House was neutral. It believed in compromise. Early on in the show there was this immense 13-page tracking shot, where the camera's backing off from John Spencer, God rest his soul [who played Leo McGarry, Bartlett's best friend and chief of staff]. And he keeps moving but he has issues and problems at every step. He hears the president has had an accident on his bicycle. He hears news from all over the world. All one shot—context, the mass of tasks and things needing action. And then the camera suddenly backs away from him and you realise he's in the Oval Office. You feel the space. And there's Mrs Landingham with a schedule. She asks has he heard about the president. 'Sure, the klutz!' he says. And she goes very serious and says, 'Now, we'll have no talk like that in this office!' And you felt the respect. 'The West Wing' was always meant to be about a team that had the privilege of running the country."

I ask, did the Bush administration help with the show? "Not a bit. What they liked to do was send a memo. 'Friends', it would say, 'you got a detail in the secret-service coverage wrong. Please don't make us look like idiots.' Just the criticism. So imagine my shock when I see himself landing on a >

> battleship—'Mission accomplished!' Because that's something the secret service would never have permitted. He overrode them. He just wanted to do it!"

SHEEN HAS DIRECTED pictures himself, and he loves what the camera can do. But, above all, he loves the *mise-en-scène* of handling power and authority. He looks presidential, and he is four years younger than John McCain—one of the few Republicans for whom he has any respect. You understand why, when he entered the hotel where we're lunching, the staff fell back, yet kept a close guard on him—as if they were his security detail. And this Martin Sheen has over 200 movie and television credits to his name. He works like someone who was once a very poor boy, and he admits that, "If they'd paid me more, I'd have worked less, maybe."

Sheen was born in a very poor part of Dayton, Ohio, in 1940, the son of a Spanish immigrant and an Irish woman. His name was Ramon Estevez. He was one of ten children and he was born crippled. Life was tough. "I am not a star," he concedes. "And", he goes on, his face wreathed in smiles, the pale blue eyes alight, "it's a mystery to me why not!"

The diagnosis of "failure" is not a frequent part of interviews with actors. So bear with this line a moment. "I came up in the James Dean era. He was the phenomenon of the day, taken away in 1955. I went to New York, to act, in 1959, and there was a belief then that if you were talented you would get your break. It had happened with so many kids—[Montgomery] Clift, Marlon [Brando], Paul Newman. Me! You were trusted on your merit. It was a lie! It was a crapshoot. And as time passed I was told, 'Well, this is what you do, you help your luck along. You flatter the right people. You tell them they're terrific. You eat some shit.' I couldn't do it. And then I got 'Badlands' and I thought this is pretty good stuff. And others said so, too. I thought, now, now it's going to happen. It didn't."

"Badlands" was a small independent picture, the first made by Terrence Malick. It was about a couple of kids—Martin and Sissy Spacek—who go on a casual killing spree and head for the Dakotas. When they're captured at last, the star-crazy cops tell the boy, Kit, he looks like James Dean, and the kid preens and does a look and a walk that are funny and tragic. Martin Sheen had arrived: handsome, fast, sexy, hungry, dangerous and absolutely lovable. Stand back. It was his "On the Waterfront".

Of course, he worked all the time, but when "Apocalypse Now" came along, Sheen was a replacement for Harvey Keitel. The film that followed was a famous set of disasters, with Brando arriving out of shape and hardly ready to work. So in the wreckage of the auteur theory and the near-breakdown of the director, Francis Coppola, it was possible to lose sight of Sheen's astonishing performance as the young officer sent up the river to terminate the command of a rogue colonel, with extreme prejudice.

"Apocalypse" was a nightmare for everyone. Sheen was so committed he had a heart attack. And he tells a story that backs up what he was saying about not being a star. "I remember the first day Marlon worked. I was held prisoner, all tied up, and Marlon had to walk into the scene and drop

Seminal Sheen

BADLANDS (1973) was based on the 1958 rampage of Charles Starkweather and his girlfriend, Carril Fugate in Nebraska and Wyoming But in Terrence Malick's picture the sordid killings were turned into a fairy story about kids adventuring in the wide open spaces. Sheen was encouraged to base his character, Kit, on the mythic figure of James Dean. That drew upon all the young actor's hero-worship and it established Sheen's lifelong interest in the small Indiana town where Dean was raised. Sheen was over 30 already, but Sissy Spacek (playing Holly) was only 24 They had astonishing chemistry, yet it was not sexual or violent. They were like lost children who had found a sibling. At the end, Kit was captured (and Starkweather himself was executed), but in the movie he gets his reward—the cops decide he looks like that James Dean guy And so he is fulfilled by his terrible fame

KOBAL KOBAL REX FEATURES

Freddie Forrest's head in my lap. Well, it was a scene where it was raining, and so they had rain machines on us all the time. And I was being watched by these Ifuago tribesmen, just dressed in loincloths. And they were getting soaked and shivering as if they had a fever.

"So we did a take and they called 'Cut!' and I looked at the natives and I said, 'Look, do we have any blankets? Someone is going to get sick.' And I was told, 'Oh, don't worry, Marty, they're used to it. They'll be all right!'

"So, enter Marlon, and he comes in, walks up to me and drops the head. 'Cut! Perfect! That's lovely. But we'll do it again.' Now Marlon had not heard me earlier, but he looks at the Ifuago and he says, 'Excuse me, but these fellows are suffering here, and there's no need. Don't we have some blankets or dry clothes for them?'

"Whereupon, 'Certainly, Mr Brando. Fetch some blankets. Let's get these guys feeling better.' Just like that, so I thought, 'I don't know about this.' And I was more likely to be trouble myself."

SHEEN CAN TRACE this rebelliousness all the way back, and here you have two strands making one root—the nature of his politics and his career waywardness all in one. "When I was a boy, I was a caddy. I started aged nine. My brothers told me it was time to start. I began at this very exclusive country club in Dayton. It had a profound effect on me. The people who played there, for the most part, were self-involved, angry, alcoholic, miserable, over-indulged. Horrible people. They called you 'Caddy'—never bothered with your name. There were no black caddies allowed. The only blacks shone shoes or served food in the clubhouse. And my brothers said, 'Be nice to them. Angle for the tip.' But the thing they would do is compromise you. They expected you to cheat. So you carried an extra ball or two and if they drove out of bounds, why you'd search around and say, 'Over here, sir!' I could never bring myself to cheat for them.

"And as an actor, I can't sell myself. I was never secure until 'The West Wing', and even then I was meant at first to be in about one episode in five. But when the network saw the pilot, they said, we want to see the Oval Office. So that meant me." So the president got promoted, and very soon Sheen had the biggest job of his career. He is modest about his ideas on the presidency. Except for this: "The work! I had to be at the studio at 5.30am, so I'm leaving home at five. Sometimes I'm finished at ten at night. It wasn't worth going home, so I'd stay at a small hotel by the studio. And then, once we were a hit, I negotiated myself a break—four-day weeks. The long weekend saved me. Perhaps the president should think about it."

It's a strange thing: few actors have been busier, and very few have done so many projects where their fee might have been waived or held to scale, because of the cause. And somehow it has always come down to politics. Martin Sheen has made TV movies on his issues—nuclear installations, torture—and on the rights of children who might be aborted. In famous mini-series, he has played Jack Kennedy, Bobby and Nixon's lawyer, John Dean. But his ancestry leads to his devout Catholicism, and another Sheen story that is the essence of the man. >

APOCALYPSE NOW (1973) had a marine lieutenant charged with the mission of eliminating Colonel Kurtz, a rogue officer who had gone up the river in South-East Asia. As a way of proving himself, Sheen did the astonishing opening scene where he is delirious in a Saigon hotel room, defending himself against inner demons and external enemies. He got himself drunk. He nearly slashed himself to pieces. And he generally frightened the life out of everyone else in the room with him. But it was the start of an uncommon commitment in which Sheen was on screen most of the time—and it was enough to give Sheen a warning heart attack.

THE WEST WING (1999-2006), as first conceived by writer Aaron Sorkin, was to be a group study of the lives of those who worked in the White House—the famous and the unknowns. When Martin Sheen was engaged to play the president, the idea was that he would work every fourth or fifth week. Instead he came to dominate the series. What Sheen learnt on the show was that presidents (and those close to them) work astonishing hours, and yet must never lose their patience or energy. In most fictional situations, actors have one crisis in mind at a time. But a president only multi-tasks. He endures crises to a point of absurdity sometimes. And so the man's ability to survive, while still awake, to keep thinking and thinking straight, is of more lasting importance than his fundamental ideology. The one presidential reform Sheen urges is the contract break he achieved with the network: the four-day week.

The Spaniard in Marty Sheen might die on the barricades, but the Irishman can't stop laughing

> "I have a lawyer, in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, a public defender and still paying off his college loans. He's a great man. And one day he calls me and he says—this is during the Gulf war—we've got to go to Rome to meet Mother Teresa. Because she's ready to go see the pope. So we fly to Rome and we go to a place we've been told to attend. It's like a chicken coop. But she comes in—Mother Teresa. She is tiny! Four feet ten!"

It's getting to be an Irish story now. "She says, 'How are you, boys? What can I do for you?' And we say if she can see the pope about the war and if the Vatican can go to the International Court. It might stop it. She says, 'Really? And will the countries obey?' She's priceless.

"Well, she says she'll do it. But then she wants to bless us and our children. And she gets a packet of these little medals and she blesses me and my wife, Janet, and then my four children—Carlos, Emilio, Renée and Ramon. And she asks 'Anyone else?' Well, just before I left I was talking to Marlon and it was the time when his son [Christian, who died early this year] was on trial for killing his sister's boyfriend. You remember? And Marlon was crushed. So I said, 'Mother, there's this actor, a friend of mine, who's having a lot of trouble.' 'Oh, who's that?' she asks. So I tell her it's Marlon Brando. And she's never heard of him!

"Later on, I told Marlon the story and I have to tell you he was in tears. It meant so much to him."

THERE'S A GREAT deal of Martin Sheen in that story—not just the faith or the trust in prayer, but the importance of family. Sheen has had but one wife and four children and he is famous for the way he looks after those kids. Carlos is the actor Charlie Sheen; Emilio is the actor and director Emilio Estevez. Time and again as we talk, we refer to the film "Bobby"—about the last day in Bobby Kennedy's life—that Emilio made in 2006, with Martin taking a small role.

Sheen looks as American as a president, so you might miss how Irish and Spanish he is. And then there is the being crippled. I thought I knew a bit about Sheen and I've seen a lot of his films. But until I met him I didn't know that his left arm is three inches shorter than the right. "I was a forceps delivery, in Dayton, and the man made a mess of it. My shoulder was crunched up and the muscle in the arm never grew. I have hardly any lateral movement."

I'm amazed, and I remark on films—from "Badlands" to "The Departed"—where he has seemed entirely active. He beams again—it is a source of pride today.

"Not that it always was," he tells me. "When I first came to New York I met a doctor and he said he had an experimental treatment. He thought he could make it right. And I was set to have this operation. So I turned up at his office one day and as I waited so patients came in and they were all of them really crippled. They could hardly move. They had crooked bodies. And I was passing. So I left the office and I determined I'd make out as best I could."

Over the years, he has been arrested on at least 50 political demonstrations—one of which earned him three years' probation. He has felt the anger of dire poverty, and he has overcome drink and drug problems in himself, which have also afflicted some of his sons. But he's gentle and forgiving and you value his soft, reasonable voice on all the documentaries he's helped along. The Spaniard in Marty Sheen might die on the barricades, but the Irishman can't stop laughing. "On 'Apocalypse'," he says, "there were long nights in the Philippines where Francis, Marlon and I would go over the script. One night it was the whole night. We'd been sitting in the dark with candles, writing and rewriting. And in the morning, Marlon had taken his pages and folded paper hats. He had the script on his head!"

You can say that Sheen had his faith on his side, or you could argue that he is a fierce, self-made demon of work and determination who's not going to cheat unless the cheating is only acting. Like that odd flourish with which President Bartlett put on his jacket: that was a trick Martin Sheen had been running for years. ■

The West Wing: The Complete Series is available on DVD from Warner Home Video (44 discs, 112 hours, £89.97 at Amazon)

MARTIN SHEEN WAS PHOTOGRAPHED AT THE SUNSET TOWER HOTEL

THE SOUL IN THE MACHINE

THE SNUGGLING IFBOT WILL SING TO YOU, ACTROID DER WILL GREET YOU WITH A SMILE. DOMINIC ZIEGLER GETS UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH THE TANGLE OF ACTUATORS AND WIRE THAT THE JAPANESE COUNT AS FRIENDS

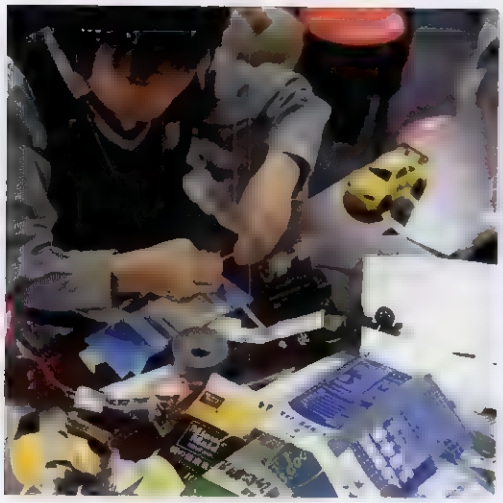
THE CHILDREN WERE on the floor making robots—everything from an old milk carton and simple electric motor, to figures full of wires and struts able to kick a football into goal. It was the cluttered Osaka workshop of Tatsutsugu Yoshitani, a 59-year-old, twinkling robot-builder. Yoshitani runs it with his friend Kazuhiro "Doc" Ohno, who repairs the blind, the halt and the infirm of the robot world. And then I popped the bubble of joy with a casual question, typical of the Westerner, instantly regretted: presumably what the children really liked building were attack machines that waged full-blown robot war on the workshop floor? The Doc looked at me as if I needed help. Yoshitani stopped mid-stream: "Robots", he said slowly and gently, "are not just machines. They are friends. Sumo wrestling: that's okay. But killing other robots: it's a taboo."

My question had betrayed a chasm of ignorance. In Japan people "feel love for robots", as the Doc put it, and want to care for them. They give robots human qualities—*kawaii*, "cute", is perhaps Japan's most squealed word. Robots are not threatening or alienating, they create feelings of security, comfort and companionship. Their cuteness tips over into the cloying. Don't misunderstand me. I was not taken with Western notions of robots as a threat—of Daleks and Terminators. But I could take them or leave them.

At least, that is what I thought. Later that day I was at ATR, a government-linked research institute in a high-tech suburb outside Kyoto. Takayuki Kanda was my guide, a 32-year-old with an elegant wave of hair and an angelic patience. His lab gave off an aura of wide-eyed wonder much like the children's workshop, but the chest-high robots in varying states of assembly showed an incomparable degree of complexity. The morning's anarchic exuberance had been replaced by a Zen-like silence as researchers worked at their terminals. >

ASTROBOY, ORPHAN AND BOY HERO

DANIEL & GEOFUCHS TOYGIANTS



MURATA BOY ON TWO WHEELS

AMATEUR ANDROID-MAKING IN YOSHITANI'S WORKSHOP
ABOVE WABOT 2 AT THE KEYBOARD
RIGHT MURATA BOY ON TWO WHEELS
SNUGGLING IFBOT WILL SING AND PLAY GAMES

> Kanda showed me a video of field tests of a stationary English-speaking robot, 120cm (4ft) high, that had been put in a primary school for two weeks to see how children reacted to it—and it to them. At first, the children were enthused. Each pupil could be identified by a radio tag. If the child came close, the computer might call out the child's name and propose playing a language game. This was exciting, but with so many children crowding about, the robot couldn't cope. It got confused. It overheated. Sometimes it had to shut down and rest. And a curious thing happened: I felt a twinge of sympathy for it.

After a few days, the children lost interest. But even then, one or two would go over to the robot because no one was playing with it. How cute, I found myself thinking.

THE WORD "ROBOT" first appeared in 1921, in a play by the Czech writer Karel Capek. It depicted a dystopia in which human clones are assembled—a *robotnik* was a medieval Czech serf condemned to a life of drudgery. But the slaves rebel, all but destroying the human race. Robot scientists are following in the footsteps of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein—letting human technical power run amok.

But not in Japan. Late last year Tokyo's giant biennial robot show opened to packed crowds. Fuji Heavy Industries showed off Tondon, named after a snake in Balinese mythology: it acts as a robotic janitor that uses global positioning, gyroscopes and optical sensors to wander about buildings introducing itself and cleaning floors and sweeping leaves; it can even operate the lift.

Sanrio boasted Actroid DER, a Hello Kitty-loving "fembot"—a female android—whose limbs, upper body and facial expressions are meant to look lifelike with the help of air-powered actuators imitating muscle movements. By synchronising voice and body language, Actroid DER can greet and look decorative—just like Japan's army of corporate "OLs", or office ladies. Actroid DER is for hire for conventions and the like, for ¥400,000 ($3,750) for five days. In a similar vein, Nippon Dental University has developed a pretty woman, called Simroid, with sensors in her mouth and on her chest. "Ouch," she cries if students handle her rudely and "thank you" if they are gentle.

Two salarymen each cuddled a RealCare Baby, on sale for just ¥68,000. With today's lower birth rate, one explained, parents-to-be have little experience of young children. Thanks to these dolls, they can practise changing nappies and feeding. A nipple-sensor clips to the pocket of your suit-jacket and it links to a sensor in the one-month-old baby's mouth: suckle long enough, and it expresses satisfaction. If you let the baby's head drop back, it bursts into tears, and you must rock and cuddle it to sleep in penance.

In search of insight, I made a pilgrimage to the whimsical museum dedicated to Tetsuwan Atomu—Mighty Atom or Astroboy in English—and the late Osamu Tezuka, the robot's bulb-nosed creator in a French beret and big square glasses. Mighty Atom, prince among *manga* characters, was an instant hit when it first appeared in 1951 as a series. Twelve years later it became Japan's first animated television series, an even greater success. Rare is the Japanese who cannot sing the theme tune about an atomic-powered robot-boy with searchlight eyes, ears a thousand times sharper than ours and an ability to shoot bullets from his backside. His fans say that he summed up a sense that tomorrow could be brighter than today.

The museum is in Takarazuka, where Tezuka grew up, a resort town outside Osaka drenched in its own cloying brand of whimsy, for it sprang up around the all-woman Takarazuka Review Company, still popular after nearly a century of song-and-dance dramas where women play the parts of idealised men. As a child, Tezuka had often gone

PHOTOGRAPHS GEOFF JOHNSON
JAPAN, JANUARY 2006

ALPHA PRESS

"THERE YOU GO, ASTROBOY, ON YOUR FLIGHT INTO SPACE! ROCKET HIGH, THROUGH THE SKY, WHAT ADVENTURES YOU'LL FACE!"

TELEVISION THEME SONG FOR "MIGHTY ATOM"

to the theatre with his mother, and the magic rubbed off on him. Even more magical, early sketchbooks show a passion for animals, beetles in particular, which he drew in minutely observed pen-strokes (later, he chose Osamushi—a ground beetle—as his pen name). But the most profound influence on the young Tezuka was the trauma of the American firebombing of Japanese cities towards the end of the second world war, along with the nuclear bombs dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Tezuka, sent to work for the imperial war effort in Osaka, witnessed the horror first-hand.

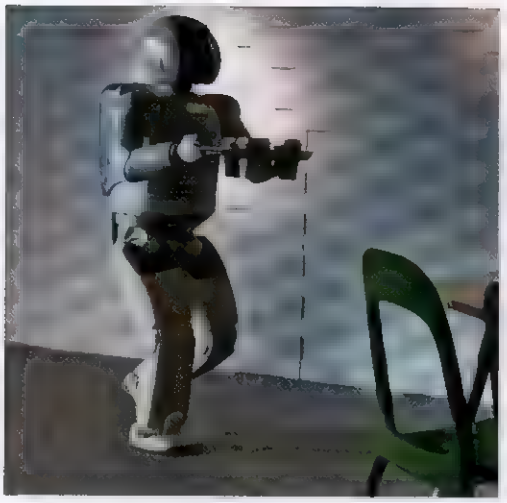
Mighty Atom embodies much of Japan's post-war trauma. Like many orphaned young Japanese, he had no parents, and his grief-stricken inventor created him in an attempt to bring a son back from the dead. To a Western mind, it seems strange that just six years after the Hiroshima bomb (which the Japanese soon referred to as "*pika-don*", or "flash-bang"), Tezuka should make his robot boy atomic. But the author seemed to be reflecting a wider Japanese sense that evil lies not in technology, but in the use to which it is put.

Seeing destruction, Mighty Atom becomes humanity's critic: he is, indeed, a robot with a soul, even offering his own life to save humanity. As Timothy Hornyak puts it in the definitive illustrated history of Japanese robots ("Loving the Machine", Kodansha, 2006): "He is a moral agent with a strong sense of justice that continually spurs him to leap to the defence of both humans and robots in quandaries that often involve high technology…he is a robot who experiences wrenching doubt and suffering."

Mighty Atom spawned a welter of other *manga* and *anime* series featuring robots as the central characters. Some had much more violence than Tezuka's creation—after all, many series had plastic toys to sell, and Japanese boys are no different in liking guns and swords. Even here, though, subtle differences abound. Since the late 1970s adolescents have grown up with the hugely popular *Gundam anime* and computer games. In these, protagonists are thrown, orphan-like, into harsh, unsentimental wars which they fight by inhabiting giant, two-legged "mobile suits". To a Western mind, perhaps, the emotion might be like being in command of a tank, having a grand time blasting away. But in "Wrong About Japan" (Faber, 2004), by Peter Carey, the Australian writer and a *Gundam* enthusiast, says: "When you see these robots being knocked about and hurt, you'll notice the person operating the robot is also in pain…You must understand that these pilots are in the womb. They feel what the mother feels...This is quite the opposite of isolating yourself from the world…It is a safe place in which you can interact with the world."

To set a futuristic stamp on Mighty Atom, his creator gave the lad with twin horns of hair an outlandish birth date: April 7th 2003. When it came round, that day was marked with all sorts of hoopla—fireworks shows, conferences, exhibitions. At a fancy-dress parade in Takadanobaba, the Tokyo neighbourhood housing the laboratory from which Mighty Atom emerged, a lawyer in his 70s, dressed in the white smock of Professor Ochanomizu, the boy's protector, told a newspaper that the reason people loved the boy so much is that: "We Japanese want to live alongside robots."

Even if "partner robots", as their developers call them, have not yet moved wholesale into the home or office, ordinary people now believe such a move will take place. In a country whose population of 127m is forecast to fall by 30m over the next half-century, and already with the world's >



[FAR LEFT] ASIMO AT YOUR SERVICE
[LEFT] BOT OF THE BALL. A DANCING ROBOT FROM NOMURA UNISON

> highest share (one-fifth) of elderly, partner robots, the idea goes, will soon be able to carry out household chores, guard homes and offices, care for the old and guide the lost.

Developers hope to sell robots that help old people to the lavatory and the like. Today, commercial products are mainly to provide companionship. The Snuggling Ifbot is a hit in nursing homes: it sings, plays quiz games and reminds residents to take their medicine. Paro the baby harp seal responds to stroking and attention, like a pet. Its developers, who call Paro a "mental commit" robot, ascribe therapeutic powers to it and say that it delays senescence.

Filipina nurses would love to care for the aged. But a citizenry that evinces deep discomfort when people from other countries are among it has set its heart against floods of foreigners. As Japanese robot engineers like to say: "R before I", robots before immigration. What is more, Japanese society exhibits still a nice degree of hierarchy and an excruciating desire not to put anyone out. Nursing staff are below patients, but it is hard to affirm your higher station if your bottom is being cleaned.

BACK IN HIS lab, Tatsutsugu Yoshitani pulled out a replica of a robot I instantly recognised from having read descriptions of the original. A *haiku* had been composed in its honour:

Coolness by the gate
as the tea-serving doll brings
a refreshing cup

The robot was a plump-faced boy in traditional kimono, about 15cm high, and his party trick was to travel towards a guest, nodding and offering a cup of green tea on a tray before him. After the guest drains the cup and puts it back on the tray, the boy does an about-turn and shuffles back to where he started. It's a charming display, and both the *haiku* and the wind-up gadget, or *karakuri*, are two centuries old.

Perhaps the genius of *karakuri* was the late-19th-century inventor, Hisashige Tanaka. His masterpiece on display in Tokyo's National Science Museum is a jolly-faced archer who takes an arrow from his quiver, nocks it, leans forward to sight at the target and fires. Clockwork *karakuri*, which remain a thriving art today, could not have developed without absorbing European knowledge of clocks, but the new technology was soon given a very Japanese twist. It was, as Yoshitani explains, used to delight more than to be of use.

The world's most advanced humanoid today is Asimo, 120cm high, the product of 18 years of research and countless billions of yen spent by Honda, its maker. Every afternoon Asimo takes to the stage at Honda's gleaming Tokyo showroom: he should be on every tourist's itinerary. Asimo makes a rather shy entrance, treading gingerly as his servo-motors wheeze. But with his androgynous voice, his mobility—he can dance, run, dodge obstacles—and, yes, his ability to serve tea, this diminutive thing in his space suit has a capacity to delight. Asimo has rung the bell at the New York Stock Exchange, and laid flowers at the foot of Capek's bust in Prague.

The dream that Honda promotes is for Asimo to dwell at home, a loved and useful member of the family. Yet for all his sophistication, Asimo shows how far there is still to go before robots can really be like people and live with them. His gait leaves him bent-kneed and flat-footed and

INSTEAD OF DEVELOPING ROBOTS FOR ROOMS, WHY NOT MAKE THE ROOM ITSELF A ROBOT, FESTOONING IT WITH CAMERAS AND SENSORS ON CEILING, FLOOR AND BED? THE ROBOT WOULD BECOME THE ROOM'S DUMB SLAVE

EFT A PARTNER ROBOT FROM TOYOTA BLOWS ITS OWN TRUMPET

his actions must still be programmed. As his chief engineer, Satoshi Shigemi, explains, Asimo is not yet able to make his own decisions, struggling to assess information and act on it.

Indeed, says Tokyo University's Tomomasa Sato, home environments are far too complex, varied and dynamic for human-type robots physically to master. To take one example: while Asimo identifies his teacups by a sticker on them, telling a full cup from an empty one is immensely hard. Not only must a robot's camera-eyes differentiate tea in the cup from the cup itself, but also the reflection of the room on the surface of the tea. Our brains compute these visual subtleties in an instant; robots struggle.

Developing robots to replicate the processes of human thought that lead to action, then, raises near-insurmountable challenges. Sato takes a counter-intuitive approach. Instead of developing robots for rooms, why not make the room itself a robot, as it were, festooning it with cameras and sensors on ceiling, floor and bed? That would have its uses in hospital, for instance, where a patient's sleeping patterns could be monitored, or where he could point at, say, a glass, and a humanoid (essentially the robot room's dumb slave) could be sent to bring it to the bed.

But the most radical ideas—and robots—are being developed under the direction of Hiroshi Ishiguro, a thatch-haired professor at Osaka University, in partnership with ATR labs. For a robot to begin to approach human levels of perception, thought process and action, he argues, an impossibly rich sensory environment and heavy computational power would be needed, and he is not going to live long enough to see it. Instead, Ishiguro and colleagues are attempting to replicate human appearance. Asimo with his space suit, his hard plastic exterior and his mechanical movements is not meant to fool anyone by his appearance. But Ishiguro wants to build robots that look and move like humans—androids, in other words. He has called forth a new discipline: android science.

At ATR, I had been led to believe I would be introduced to Ishiguro that afternoon. I was, but only in a sense. When I was ushered into the room, the professor motioned me to a chair, his hands playing nervously, his shoulders rising with each breath. "Ask me anything you like," he said, fixing me with an intent look, before staring at the floor despondently when I began to chuckle. "How many actuators do you have?" I said. "I have 50 pneumatic actuators in my upper body, including 17 in my head, five of which I use to move my lips for speech, and four actuators to make my shoulder move in a natural fashion." "Do you believe in God?" "Um, er...,": Ishiguro put his finger to his face in embarrassment. "Good question. Maybe you should ask the professor that one?"

The "professor" in front of me was being operated in a nearby room by a young research assistant. I met the real Ishiguro the next day. He argued that Japan's easy acceptance of robots had religious roots. In both Buddhism and Shintoism, the soul is everywhere and "just as we don't distinguish between humans and rocks, so we don't distinguish between humans and robots." By contrast, Honda had sought the Vatican's advice ten years ago before introducing Asimo's forerunner to Europe.

Ishiguro explained that since people anthropomorphise the object they are communicating with, then for robots to communicate convincingly, they must look and act as nearly lifelike as possible. For too long, robots had been in the hands of industrial developers who didn't think of making robots truly lifelike. Much more important than a >

THE MORE A ROBOT IS LIKE A HUMAN, THE MORE PEOPLE RELATE TO IT. BUT AT SOME POINT THE LIKENESS REPELS, PROBABLY BECAUSE IT SEEMS GHOULISH OR DEATH-LIKE. THAT IS THE UNCANNY VALLEY

WAKAMARU WILL MOVE IN WITH YOU

HIROSHI ISHIGURO AND FRIEND

> robot thinking like a human—impossible anyway—was that it should appear like one.

Ishiguro started out seven years back by attempting a replica of his four-year-old daughter. That one had a mere eight actuators (in effect, air-operated muscles) in her face, while early efforts rendered the silicone skin pallid and bloated. His daughter, used to playing with clunky robots, was introduced to her likeness. Appalled, she burst into tears, swearing never to come to her father's lab again.

It was an example of the "uncanny valley": the more a robot resembles a human, the more people relate to it in more nearly human terms. But there comes a point at which the likeness repels, probably because it seems ghoulish or death-like. That is the uncanny valley. The android of the daughter had fallen into the valley. The newer one of her father had climbed out on the other side, thanks to better skin and more actuators. Even so, the world's most lifelike android cannot deceive at ten metres for more than a few seconds. Now Ishiguro's team are developing a robot with more, smaller actuators, highly sensitive skin sensors (in the form of stretchable circuit boards) and vocal chords, to see if it can learn movements and sounds from external stimuli—just like a child.

"By developing androids", said Ishiguro, "we're discovering humans' complexity." People may be fooled for a few seconds by a good android, but hoping to fool them for one or two hours is pure fancy. Prodigious quantities of sensors, actuators and computing powers would be required. This, said Ishiguro, "is the bottleneck."

Yet even if it did not deceive, Ishiguro's android did not create great discomfort. After a few minutes, I found myself engaging with his eyes as we spoke, leaning forward to ask a question, treating him pretty much as an extension of his operator. That is the kind of purpose Ishiguro has in mind for androids: teleoperation, gets around the bottleneck. It would save him a lot of bother, he says, if his android delivered lectures to his students while he was somewhere else and even doing something else—though he admits that Americans or Europeans always lobbing questions would be more of a challenge than his docile Japanese students were. He also thinks androids raise all sorts of philosophical questions to do with ego, identity and authority. Ishiguro told me about watching a video of an attractive woman talking to his android twin. Who was she flirting with: him, the robot or its operator? The sexual frisson he says he felt seemed to supply one answer.

If that was the kind of experiment robot scientists indulged in, I wanted in myself. So after this journey, could I still say I had kept my lifelong indifference to robots? On leaving Ishiguro's effigy, I felt myself bending forward into an involuntary bow. ■

HUBLOT
GENEVE

BIG BANG
The fusion between Ceramic, 18K Red Gold and Rubber.

«Grand Prix d'Horlogerie de Genève»

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Disco Davey, Donna and Haggis have tried drink and drugs—and it helped land them on the streets. Now, as a way to recover, they are trying debates at Durham University Union. MAUREEN CLEAVE seconds the motion

BEGGARS CAN BE ORATORS

LAST DECEMBER AN unusual debate took place in Durham University Union—it was unusual less in the subject, which was This House Would Ban Alcohol in the UK, than in the participants. There was one student, Rachel Francis, for the motion and one, Siddharth Khajuria, against. With them on either side were three ex-drug, ex-alcohol abusers, all of whom had been homeless, some in prison, so when it came to the motion they would know what they were talking about. All have worked in Ron Eager House in Newcastle, a drop-in centre for the homeless, who are given shaving-kits, tea and coffee, showers, clean clothes, food, and help with applications for things like housing and benefits. Each year the centre gets 19,000 visits. It is financed largely by the charity, Tyneside Cyrenians, and most of the debaters have come through a project called Trading Places.

Five hours before the debate, Ron Eager House was throbbing with excitement. There are two very small offices on the ground floor with computers and so on, but the place looks more like Steptoe's yard, with plastic bags all over the floor—stuff left by the homeless for safe-keeping—odd teddies everywhere, old jeans, a fold-up electric piano in a bag, a barbecue…In one office, Tammi Owers, aged 38, blonde and pretty, who manages the staff, had switched off the security cameras and was using her electric hair-straighteners. Her colleague, Laura, and a tall willowy creature called Donna with angel's wings tattooed on her shoulders were changing into evening gear for a smart dinner in Durham Castle before the debate.

"I'm really really nervous," Donna said, slipping into an elegant black outfit she and Laura had bought the day before for £40 in Topshop. "You couldn't imagine anything like this when you're sitting on drugs and drink and doing all sorts of things." But Tammi says just because you've been a drug user doesn't mean you haven't got a brain. "I've been on the streets for years and now I'm going for a full-blown debate and a fancy meal with the upper classes." She'd been debating every Tuesday for a whole term with the other ex-users and the students. They had taken on immigration, Iraq, animal testing, global warming and—nearer home—Beggars Can Be Choosers.

"We played this game: how to keep your voice-level down. Two people have a conversation and they're backing away from each other but they have to keep their voice at the same level without shouting. People have ways of fobbing you off, but shout and you've lost it."

In the office next door were a noisy lot: Disco Davey (an ex-DJ and very good at Elvis's hippy-hippy shakes), Barry (an ex-boxer), Darren, David (Haggis to friends) and Trev, all changing into dinner-jackets bought with a donation of £500. We heard a wail. "Where's my dickie bow?" Then more wailing about how to tie the wretched things. There was mild anxiety about the correct use of knives and forks at dinner. Then singing. "Over-excited," said Laura. Someone hammered >

ILLUSTRATIONS SIMON PEMBERTON

HIPPOLYTE ROMAIN is an illustrator and Sinophile. This Mandarin bed was imported in 700 bits and assembled by Chinese craftsmen. *Paris, 18th arrondissement*

Left

AN ANONYMOUS DANCER from the Moulin Rouge on a Chinese bed with a mirrored ceiling. It was ordered by another dancer in her building, which has since become a "rendez-vous" hotel. *Paris, 9th arrondissement*

ALAIN PASSARD, chef at L'Arpège in Paris, in the middle of the vegetable patch where he sleeps in the summer. *Fille-sur-Sarthe, near Le Mans*

Right

PAOLO CALIA is an artist who got a taste for the baroque when he was working as a set-designer for Fellini in the 1970s. He sleeps in one bed and keeps another for sex. *Paris, 13th arrondissement*

Left
MONSEIGNEUR JEAN-BERNARD DE CAZENAVE is an archimandrite in the French-speaking Syriac Orthodox community. In winter he sleeps in an enclosed Béarnais bed from the late 18th century. In summer he moves to the north side of the house, and a bed from the time of Louis XVI. *Ferrières in the Pyrenees*

GILLES EBERSOLT specialises in off-the-ground constructions. The Ballule has hurtled down Mount Fuji and the couloir of the Aiguille Noire de Peuterey near Mont Blanc. At rest, it serves as a water-borne sleeping capsule. *Limousin*

PATRICK-LOUIS VUITTON on a trunk-bed invented by his great-grandfather and produced by the family firm. The original design was made at the end of the 19th century for the explorer Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza. *Forêt du Perche, Normandy*

Left

GÉRARD DE VILLIERS, author, wanted his room to look like a pre-war brothel—mirrors and all.
Paris, 16th arrondissement

CHLOÉ BLUM likes a life of repose. Her bed, designed by Jean Royère, is the only furniture in her new apartment. So she lives lying down.
Paris, 1st arrondissement

LARRY GAGOSIAN

"He's a combination of a corporate raider, a dark lord, Peggy Guggenheim and a railroad magnate"

ABOVE LARRY GAGOSIAN (CENTRE) WITH ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER (LEFT) AND DAMIAN HIRST NEW YORK 2007
RIGHT © TIM NOBLE AND SUE WEBSTER, 2001

Larry Gagosian is the man who changed the art world. And he doesn't want to talk about it. SARAH DOUGLAS spoke to dozens of his friends, colleagues and artists to find out who he is and how he works

ON A DECEMBER evening, in the teeth of a financial gale that may yet blow away the art boom, Larry Gagosian opened his seventh gallery, a 700-square-metre space in Rome. Even as other art dealers braced for a recession, Gagosian did what he has always done: he forged ahead. The *Art Newspaper* brooded on recession, quoting an unnamed former associate: "If this one really kicks in, he's sure to be opening yet more new spaces, in Moscow, India or China." As it happens, Gagosian had already made headway in Moscow, taking a temporary space there in October, and, a few weeks after Rome opened, *New York* magazine aired a rumour that he was scouting in China. Gagosian has become such a force, synonymous with the market itself, that all this activity may indeed herald a downturn.

It used to be thought that no dealer had ever matched Joseph Duveen, who criss-crossed America before the first world war, hawking Impressionist masterpieces from his briefcase to robber barons eager to add some status to their wealth. But then along came Gagosian. He has spent the past quarter-century creating a network of galleries—three in New York, one in Los Angeles, two in London, and now the one in Rome—that is unheard of in the art world. While others busied themselves in their boutiques, he built a multinational corporation for selling painting and sculpture—the contemporary collector's Wal-Art.

FALSE START
$17.9m
JASPER JOHNS, 1959

Avoiding scrutiny has become a Gagosian hallmark. Since the mid-1990s, when he hired a publicist, he has rarely given interviews. I made several requests, all fruitless, and found that his reticence and power made others think before speaking about him. "A no-win situation", was how one dealer put it. "You say something bad about Larry, it gets back to you. You say something good about Larry, it gets back to you." Another gasped, "Oh, LG," and leapt away from me, his jacket grazing the painting behind him. A third said that nobody would speak to me. But they did.

They painted a picture with several layers. "I have one word for him: fearless," says Irving Blum, an LA collector and one-time dealer.

Another collector who would not be named qualified that judgment a little: "I don't know that he's fearless. What I would say is, he is a person impossible to insult. You could say anything: he'll call you again. He's determined. He's incredibly tenacious."

Even if Gagosian is the art world's best businessman, "he's not a salesman," says Jerry Saltz, art critic at *New York* magazine. "You don't see him working the floor. He's like a visitor from another planet, an extraterrestrial trying to communicate with our species."

Even if he is an opportunist, "his opportunism is transparent," says Peter Schjeldahl, art critic of the *New Yorker*. "It's not underhand: it's all overhand. He is not complicated. He's like a shark or a cat or some other perfectly designed biological mechanism."

Even if he is a dealmaker, he is one with rare panache: "Larry enjoys these different types of transactions, that type of energy," says the artist Jeff Koons. "It's kind of like a sexual energy."

Even if Gagosian is all of those things, he also transcends them. "Look at how he navigates the art world," says Sandy Heller, an art adviser. "There is an artistic trailblazing. It's what we look for in an artist: absolute ingenuity; reference to the past but a trajectory into the future. And that's Larry Gagosian. Whether a calculated construct or just a by-product of an unbelievable moment in time, it's a perfect storm where Larry becomes art."

Like one of his own pictures, Gagosian appears ageless. He certainly seems younger than his 62 years, with a durable tan from summers in the Hamptons and winters on St Barths. A sharp dresser—once pegged as an Armani man, he has expanded his repertoire—he looks athletic, thanks, they say, to laps in the pool in his townhouse on Manhattan's Upper East Side. He has thick, silver hair, cut close to the head, which is used by the reporters who have the fiendish task of spotting buyers at auction as a polestar in the constellation of the saleroom. If you keep watching him, you can detect a touch of vanity as he reaches up from time to time to smooth his 'do.

Gagosian is also easy to spot swimming through the throng that gathers for his openings. There he was in his 24th Street gallery, late in the New York summer, sleek in a dark suit and playing host to downtown curators, collectors and artists, including Christo and Jean-Claude. The show was for Paul Noble, a mid-career British artist who draws large landscapes of a seemingly borderless imaginary place called Nobson Newtown. A few days earlier, Gagosian had attracted a higher-

rent audience, including John Silberman, the lawyer for the de Kooning estate; the architect Richard Meier, who designed Gagosian's gallery in LA; and Heller, who works with clients like Steve Cohen, a hedge-fund squillionaire. That show was at his smaller space, two blocks south, with tens of millions of dollars of work by the late Abstract Expressionist Willem de Kooning. Some were on loan from museums, others for sale.

Gagosian was dancing his signature step between the two sides of the art market—the secondary, or resale market, with de Kooning, and primary merchandise straight from the studio, with Noble. Schjeldahl explains how the art business used to be made up of one-shop boutiques.

"It was going to get bigger and more organised, with or without Gagosian," he says. "He theatricalised the change. The shows in his front rooms are incidental to the business he does in his back rooms."

"For an artist, going to Gagosian is like playing for the Yankees," says Heller. He has the most money and the best players, and he seems to pick up talent whenever he puts his mind to it. He can resell artworks to his network of clients as if he were an auction house, but without the houses' overheads—or the public scrutiny that goes with them. Having launched a swashbuckling assault on the once-gentlemanly business of dealing, he has the money, the space and the masterpieces to stage mind-blowing, scholarly exhibitions, like a one-man museum—but without the boards and the bureaucracy.

One dealer who has been nipping at his heels—his "heir apparent", as *Vanity Fair* put it in October 2006—is David Zwirner. He co-owns the Upper East Side gallery, Zwirner and Wirth, but his main outpost is a vast space on 19th Street, which he recently expanded (shades of Gagosian), and has become known for attracting artists away from other galleries (further shades of Gagosian). There is a Gagosian-shaped thorn in Zwirner's side. The sculptor Franz West, the only artist he has lost since opening in 1993, he lost to Gagosian.

Zwirner explains that Gagosian is not his role model. "I've embraced more and more secondary-market dealings over the years, thus I get these friendly comparisons. And he has done an amazing job creating a primary-market gallery with all these important artists. But I think he never wanted to be known as a talent finder. He wanted to be known as the guy who could really maximise the career."

Gagosian has clambered to the top of his world because of his sure transformation of the secondary-market business into a one-stop shop for both sides of the market over the past 30 years. All the while he has opened new galleries. Even now, he is still building.

"Gagosianopolis!" says Saltz, a few days later, as we stand together outside the 24th Street gallery. "That's what he's creating."

GAGOSIANOPOLIS BEGAN MODESTLY in 1975 on a patio in the Westwood Village neighbourhood of Los Angeles. Gagosian, then 30, was an English graduate from UCLA who had left one job as an assistant at the William Morris talent agency and another parking cars. He has said that his upbringing brought him no real contact with art. His father was an accountant and later a stockbroker, his mother a bit-part actress. As he explained in an early interview, he borrowed the $75 rent for the patio from her and sold framed posters for $15 each. He moved on to more expensive posters and mounted his first art exhibition the following year, in a former Hungarian restaurant rented for about $400 a month.

BIG TORN CAMPBELL'S SOUP CAN (PEPPER POT)
$11.8m
ANDY WARHOL 1962

By the early 1980s, Gagosian had a proper gallery space and became the LA outpost for artists like Eric Fischl, Richard Serra and Frank Stella, who were represented by New York galleries. But he was making most of his money by broking deals between LA collectors, arranging for paintings to be plucked from the walls of one owner and rehung on the walls of another, while he pocketed the commission.

From the start, the Gagosian enterprise had a gilded aura. In 1980 Schjeldahl visited Gagosian's LA gallery for the *Village Voice*. He wrote: "The space breathes the cold excitements of money. The air in the office is like vaporised stainless steel...Gagosian told me he figures to give the business two years to prove itself. 'If I weren't doing this, I'd probably be in real estate.'"

"I was appalled by his style when he first arrived and swore I would never set foot in his gallery," Schjeldahl tells me some 28 years later. "But then I quickly realised that he had art that I wanted to see, so I gave up."

Restless in LA, Gagosian bought a fifth-floor loft in >

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> New York's SoHo art district for $10,000 and a Brice Marden painting. He opened what he has called his "first real gallery in New York" on the ground floor of a building on West 23rd Street in far west Chelsea in 1985, a good ten years before any other galleries moved to the area. His first coup came when he persuaded Emily and Burton Tremaine to let him show some of their collection of pop art, including pieces by Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg and Roy Lichtenstein.

In 1989, at the peak of a boom, he opened his headquarters on Madison Avenue, in a space once used by Sotheby's. He had been working with (some would say courted) Leo Castelli, the dealer who had discovered Rauschenberg and Johns back in the 1960s. He had also been cultivating top-notch clients, including the British advertising magnate Charles Saatchi, the Condé Nast boss Si Newhouse, and David Geffen, the entertainment mogul. By the recession of the 1990s, Gagosian had opened a gallery, designed by Richard Gluckman, on Wooster Street in Soho. With access to capital that few galleries then had, he was able to start a stable of artists, in part by poaching them from other dealers. (His words to Schjeldahl were prescient: he did go into property. One of the few dealers who owned their space in Soho, he also bought the Chelsea gallery in 1999, for a reported $5.75m. It is now worth something like $40m.)

HOMEMADE PASTA
$847,500
JOHN CURRIN 1999

© JOHN CURRIN. COURTESY OF GAGOSIAN GALLERY

GAGOSIAN ATTRACTS ARTISTS and collectors alike because he understands the intense coupling between art and money. In 2004 the top price for a painting by Takashi Murakami at auction was $624,000. Since then, Gagosian has sold Murakamis to Cohen and others, and in November one was auctioned for $2.4m. He has repeated that trick time after time. Not long after joining his stable in 2003, the painter John Currin made his auction record of $847,500; his highest price before joining Gagosian was a little over half that. Recently Adam Sender, the head of the hedge fund Exis Capital Management, reportedly sold a Currin painting through Gagosian for $1.4m. Before Glenn Brown began showing with Gagosian, in 2004, his top price at auction was $46,000; in June 2007, a painting of his made $969,000. In May, when Anselm Reyle was still represented by Gavin Brown, his work was fetching at most around $200,000 at auction. In October, after the artist had joined Gagosian's stable, a work of his was sold for nearly four times that amount.

In part, Gagosian raises artists' values just by anointing them, but there is also a splash of marketing. In October, during the feeding frenzy at London's Frieze Art Fair, he staged a show in his Britannia Street gallery called "Pop Art Is", in which he elevated his younger artists by hanging them next to Warhol and Lichtenstein. At the same time, in his New York gallery, he hung the work of Steven Parrino, who had died in 2005, next to Warhol and Hirst. He priced the Parrinos at more than a million dollars each: a few years earlier, at a different gallery, they had fetched only around $10,000.

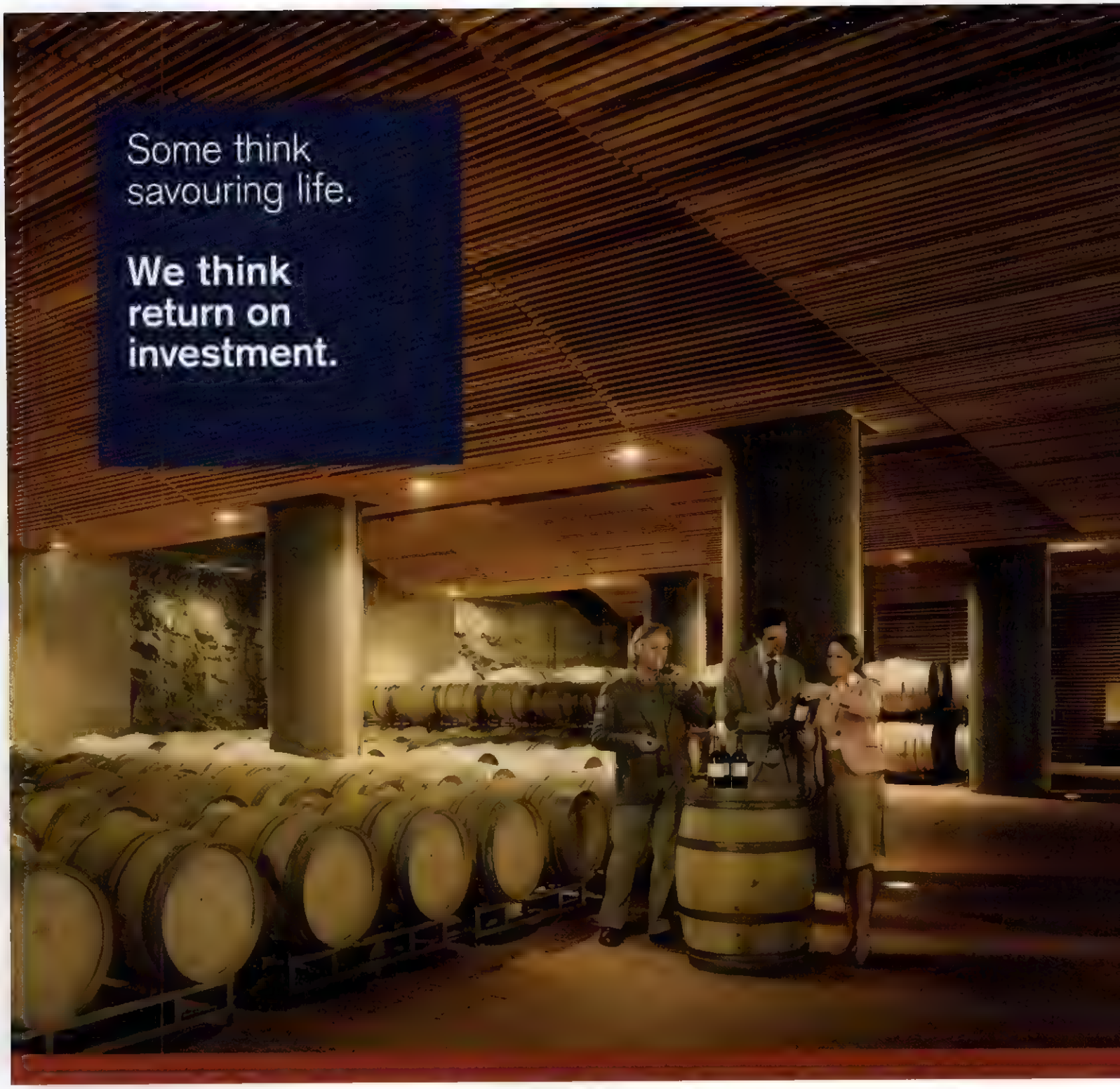
Rumours about manipulating prices abound—and, one dealer says, "there's a feared or loved thing, where there's an opting for feared rather than loved." Gagosian also had a fight with the law. In 2003 he and three others were sued by the American government for allegedly failing to pay $26.5m in income taxes, interest and penalties on art they had bought using a shell company. The following year he and the collector Peter Brant paid $9.1m in a settlement. The suit looked like a roadblock, but in retrospect it was barely a bump.

That is partly because Gagosian has an eye for art as well as money. In 1989, after a dealer dismissed him as only a salesman, a reporter asked Leo Castelli if this was true. Castelli retorted: "of two great paintings, Larry can determine what makes one greater."

"He has an enormously sophisticated visual vocabulary," said Paul Schimmel, the chief curator at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art (LA Moca). "He sees, he remembers, he understands, and he can shuffle the cards. Is he a connoisseur? Unquestionably. Can he turn connoisseurship into profit? Absolutely."

He also has the connoisseur's instinct for what he doesn't like. Eight years ago Rick Wester left Christie's to start a short-lived photography programme for Gagosian. Aiming to impress his new boss, he presented some large work by "a photographer who was well into his career, had published a number of books, had big exhibitions and was well respected by curators and collectors alike." Wester found them "bold and stark": sure to appeal to Gagosian's sensibility.

"Larry came into the room and in 30 seconds he turned around and said, 'Why would I want to show this romantic crap?' and walked out. And he was right! I didn't see it. It was like, bang, I got a really good understanding of where his eye was at...He has a very critical eye, in a good sense, and a >



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> very sharp mind. He knows how to think through things more quickly and more succinctly and more decisively than anybody I've ever met in this business."

His charisma helps. "As much as he is the tough guy and has this reputation for being a shrewd businessman and negotiator, he has charm," says Aby Rosen, a collector and property developer. "When I get angry with him, it takes me two minutes to get not angry, because he knows what to say." He has humour too. And the enthusiasm that may come from having been a self-starter. "He watches his own show almost as though he is an observer, rather than a participant," says Rosen. "He works hard to get something to a certain point, and then he looks around, and he comes up to you and says, 'Isn't that great?'"

His style appeals to a new class of collectors who have made money in finance and come to dominate the art world—collectors like Cohen, the founder and manager of SAC Capital Partners, to whom Gagosian broked the sale of David Geffen's de Kooning painting "Woman III", for $137.5m two years ago. "These new buyers are shaking up the market," says Philippe Segalot, another art adviser. "These young very rich people, many of them from the new economies, recognise themselves in contemporary art. They are competitive, and want to put together ambitious collections. Gagosian is fast, he's reactive, and he's somewhat aggressive, and they respond to that way of doing business."

THE REBEL
$969,000
GLENN BROWN 2001

© GLENN BROWN

But the hedge-fund ethos is mirrored in art-dealing. In early November Gagosian was off to LA for the opening of a travelling exhibit by Murakami at LA Moca—complete with a gig by the hip-hop singer Kanye West. A year earlier Murakami had left Marianne Boesky, his New York dealer, for Gagosian. Controversial? Nonsense, says Heller. "He's initiated this predatory practice that takes place in every other business in the world. Brokers and top traders leave to go to another firm. It's no different in the art world. He's not the only one who steals artists. It's about what the artist wants."

Indeed, Murakami told me in an e-mail what had happened. "Two friends of mine, Philippe Segalot and Emmanuel Perrotin"—his Paris dealer—"introduced me to Larry and told me that he would take very good care of me...And that was it!"

"Takashi was ready to make this move," Segalot says. Murakami's massive sculptures cost a lot to make and need a lot of room to show. When I asked what joining Gagosian meant for artists, Jerry Saltz furrowed his brow. "If you go there, you can't be looking for a parent-child relationship. You have to be independent."

The new crop of artist-businessmen, who have tuned Warhol's Factory to a higher pitch, thrives with Gagosian. Murakami has his own company, Kaikai Kiki. Damien Hirst, who bought a cache of his own work back from Charles Saatchi five years ago, retains a business manager. "Who's the better dealer," one rival jokes, "Hirst or Gagosian?"

ON A SATURDAY evening in early September, the New York art season was heaving into motion. Outside a gallery on West 24th Street, velvet ropes and a phalanx of black-clad women barred the way. Inside, the gallery was brimming over with the cream of New York's art and fashion worlds. Models traipsed down the runway in jeans bearing ghoulish patterns. The jeans were Levi's, with a difference or two: they were co-designed by Hirst, to echo his famous diamond-encrusted skull, and they cost $4,000 a pair. Gagosian was watching with undisguised enthusiasm.

This wasn't just a fashion-week show for a denim manufacturer: it was a super-sized slice of zeitgeist. Five brands were in action. There was Levi's, a mass-market label, and Hirst, whose distinctive polka dots were emblazoned on the runway and whose paintings lined the walls. Then there was Swarovski, which supplied the crystals for the jeans. There was Warhol, whose photograph greeted visitors and whose name Levi's is using to sell the jeans, called Warhol Factory x. Tying the whole parcel neatly together was the fifth and final brand: Gagosian.

A few weeks later Gagosian's Beverly Hills gallery was "maximising the career" of Tracey Emin, the British artist best known for a tent—"Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963-95". I stood in the white jewel box, designed by Richard Meier, which rubs swanky shoulders with stores like Burberry and Barneys. The film star Orlando Bloom was swanning about, admiring the Emins.

In Bloom's wake, along came the formidable, diminutive figure of Eli Broad, an LA property magnate and a Gagosian client of 30 years. It was for Broad that Gagosian bought Warhol's "Big Torn Campbell's Soup Can (Pepper Pot)" for $11.8m at Christie's in 2006.

In the early days, Broad tells me, "If you knew what you wanted, I could think of no dealer who could find it for you

faster and more effectively than Larry." And today? "Neither Larry nor I have a lot of time to waste. We don't need hours of discussion. We talk about things quickly and make decisions. He enjoys bidding for me. He likes to have people think he's the buyer of the work he's bidding on. And that's fine."

That mastery of the auction is the last, vital part of Gagosian's commercial arsenal. His first coup came in 1988 with Jasper Johns's seminal "False Start", which he bought for Si Newhouse at Sotheby's for $17m. In 2005 he bought a large stainless-steel sculpture by David Smith for $23.8m, setting a record for a post-war work.

He was also to go for the kill at November's New York sales, when everyone in the international art world makes sure that they are in town. But first he had some work to do. He opened a sold-out exhibition of giant new paintings of peonies by Cy Twombly on 21st Street. He put on a show by Georg Baselitz, Germany's foremost Expressionist figure-painter, on 24th Street. He took the stage to belt out Bobby Fuller's hit "I Fought the Law" at a party in the modernist skyscraper Lever House, owned by Aby Rosen. The collector and property developer was celebrating spending $10m on works by Damien Hirst, including the carcasses of 29 sheep and one shark, floating in formaldehyde-filled tanks.

Gagosian paused to cast winning bids at other sales, picking up a late Picasso at Christie's for $16.8m. (As it happens, the dealer is the owner of Picasso's last painting—or so says Koons.) And then came Sotheby's New York sale, where he pounced on a 1.5-tonne stainless-steel sculpture from Koons's "Celebration" series—a giant, gleaming, hot-pink heart tied at the top as though gift-wrapped with a gold ribbon and designed to dangle from the ceiling like a Christmas ornament.

HANGING HEART (MAGENTA AND GOLD)
$23.9m
JEFF KOONS 1994 2006

© JEFF KOONS/SOTHEBY'S

The night he won the Koons, Gagosian swaggered down the centre aisle of the saleroom while it was still empty. He stopped midway to cock his head at an Alexander Calder mobile, before noisily unwrapping a Koons-pink lollipop. He had helped fund the sculpture. It had been bought from him just a few years earlier by Adam Lindemann, a collector who, as things go in the art world, is married to Amalia Dayan, one of Gagosian's former employees. Frowning as the bidding escalated, Gagosian finally won Hanging Heart for $23.6m, after doing battle with an anonymous collector on the telephone. Koons tells me he bought it for a client—but not which one. With that bid Gagosian made Koons the highest-priced living artist at auction, breaking the record set in June by Hirst.

All of Gagosian's flair was on display at the opening of his new gallery in Rome. Its spacious oval core cements his relations with Twombly, who lives in Rome and supplied three huge new paintings for the inaugural show. Anna Somers Cocks, the Turin-based group editor of the *Art Newspaper*, thinks Gagosian is in Italy to buy, as well as sell. "There is oil here," she says, "and he wants to strike oil." Philippe Segalot elaborates: "Italy is a country where a number of very audacious collectors bought some works by American artists early, in the 1960s."

On the gallery's opening night, there were barricades and a handful of *carabinieri* charged with keeping an official eye on what the Italian press said would be the "party of the year". At the nearby Palazzo Barberini, the guests drank champagne before descending a marble spiral staircase to four rooms where buffets were laden with food and drink. Next door were paintings by Guido Reni, Il Guercino and Caravaggio. In the grand salon were artists, designers and the fabulously wealthy—Gagosian's own stars. Gagosian, the feared; Gagosian, who by force of will has turned art into money and money into art; Gagosian, who had gone from a patio in Lalaland to a *palazzo* in Rome.

The art market may be teetering—"We are several months into a recession!" one dealer had taken to barking by January. Stefania Bortolami, a dealer who used to work for Gagosian, tells me that some rivals "have this fantasy that he will implode and then they can all take his artists, but in actuality no one wants that, because he is holding up this market."

Jerry Saltz agrees with her: "People grouse because he has hundreds of thousands of square feet of exhibition space and represents like 95 artists, but New York would really miss him if his gallery closed down. He's sort of a combination of a corporate raider, a dark lord, Peggy Guggenheim and a railroad magnate." ■

TEOTWAWKI

Global warming, nuclear terrorism, pestilence and asteroids. ANDREW MILLER is worried—and bracing himself for The End Of The World As We Know It

WHEN I WAS at school, in the mid-1980s, my teenage friends and I would sometimes talk about what we'd do if the three-minute warning sounded. Most of us had detailed schemes for ultra-violence and revenge, often against the school librarian. But one boy, I remember, had alternative plans for the last moments before nuclear Armageddon.

"If the siren goes", vowed Nigel one morning (I have changed names to protect the guilty), "I'd run to the staff room and find Mrs Partridge," who was a curvy French teacher.

"Oh would you, Nigel?" said a voice behind us, which turned out to belong to Mr Partridge, her unimpressed teacher husband.

I've been thinking again about Nigel's dilemma: not the question of how he could ever show his face in French class again, but the problem of what to do when history runs out, or after it runs out and you find you have outlived it. Perhaps it's because I'm about to have a baby, our first, which in its way is a sort of private apocalypse, an end and a year-zero beginning. It's a prospect that makes you think about dealing with daunting new demands, like nappy-changing and putting up stair guards. But it's also made me wonder how I'd manage other once-unthinkable challenges and cataclysms. I don't mean a sushi shortage or the end of the last series of "The Wire". I mean bona fide, three-minute or no-warning havoc—an earthquake or anarchy or (since we're speculating) an insurrection by mutant London rats. What if, one way or another, the balloon goes up?

I'm not the only one wondering. Since roughly the middle of the 1990s, The End Of The World As We Know It, which survivalists abbreviate as TEOTWAWKI, has been worrying writers, film-makers and even game shows. Will Smith in "I am Legend" is only the latest in a line of recent cinema survivors. Of course, this sort of end-of-the-world fever is almost as old as the human world: European peasants were roused to millenarian frenzy by meteorological portents, and civil-war-era Americans by strife. But there are, I think, two aspects of today's bout that are new.

The first is the widening range of apocalypses for us to ponder. Twenty years ago, my friends and I knew how the orgiastic end would come. Mutually Assured Destruction seemed to us a real and ominous possibility. It monopolised our grandiose fears. These days, it has competition.

A few of the rival doomsday scenarios are revivals of old, pre-nuclear versions. "I am Legend" and "28 Days Later", in which disease almost wipes out humanity, are >

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> reworkings of a pestilential nightmare that dates back to (and beyond) "The Last Man", an 1826 novel by Mary Shelley about a survivor of pandemic plague. But some are original to us. Our global warming might parch or flood or starve Britain, blight it with killer mosquitoes or crumble bits of it into the sea. It's difficult, even for the morbid, to worry too much about an ideological apocalypse in Britain—the sudden rise of some old-Etonian Robespierre or Home Counties Lenin. British politics has been pretty sedate since 1688; even the hassle of mass industrial unrest now seems a sepia-tinged memory (I remember my father laying in crates of bottled water for an averted water-work strike in the early 1980s). But there may be a break in our intricately fragile economy or infrastructure, some blow to our arrogant modernity that sends us reeling back to the beast: the power lines go down; food imports are cut off; wholesale computer meltdown. And there is the new threat of apocalyptic terrorism.

Then there are the lower-probability worries, such as asteroid collision or alien invasion—though that famously seemed plausible enough for Orson Welles's radio adaptation of "The War of the Worlds" to have sent some people in New Jersey scurrying for the hills in 1938. There is also the off chance that everything will stop or change for ever without you ever knowing why, as in John Wyndham's "The Day of the Triffids" and "The Road" by Cormac McCarthy.

The other way in which the end of the world has changed is that, with ice caps melting and mega-terrorists proliferating, it may be a more real and urgent possibility than ever before. We thought that during the cold war, and now those MAD-anxieties look quaint and misplaced. Maybe in another 20 years we'll think the same about the new terrors of the "noughties". But I doubt it.

IT'S EASIER TO contemplate the ends of other, fictional lives and worlds than to visualise our own: that is partly why we have fiction, so its characters can die in our stead. In "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" Douglas Adams portrays the scaling down that his hero Arthur has to do to understand Earth's destruction. The disappearance of America, the vanishing of New York: these are too enormous for Arthur to comprehend. It is only when he understands that "there is no longer any such thing as a McDonald's hamburger" that he crumples.

If you do want to imagine the catastrophe—how you would cope, what would you do to save yourself and your family—where do you turn for advice?

The government can help, up to a point. From the British authorities I learn that if London, where I live, sinks or ignites or seizes up, something called the Mass Fatality Co-ordination Group will swing into action. The American government is a little more forthcoming: suggestions it made in 2003 on dealing with terrorist attacks led to a run on duct tape and plastic sheeting. But most of the tips it offers are on a level with the "Do not eat" sticker I once saw on the side of a vacuum cleaner. If a tsunami is on its way, says the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), "Stay away from the beach." If a volcano blows, "Stay away from active volcano sites."

But there are two reasons not to count entirely on the government, either when you're contemplating the crisis or when it arrives. One is that governments are secretive. Beyond the headline categories—human and animal disease, terrorism, war, industrial devastation—they are reluctant to tell you exactly what they're preparing for, perhaps for fear of seeming eccentric. (FEMA says it has no specific plans for a meteor hitting the Earth: "We will treat this like any other disaster," says a spokesman.) Also, with a few exceptions—such as a British calculation of 250,000 possible deaths from a flu pandemic, and a 1980 estimate that, in the event of full-on nuclear war, about two-thirds of Britain's population would die—governments tend tactfully to keep their worst-case reckonings to themselves.

There is a less benign explanation for the secrecy. If it comes to it, our interests and theirs may conflict. The powers the British government has to deal with national emergencies are couched in legalese and pallidly non-specific. But what they mean is this: if, on judgment day, you and I are among the unlucky ones—one of the ones too close to the blast or the spill—we may be left to rot, quarantined in "hot zones". Or we may be driven away from them, perhaps forced to leave our families behind. Our property may be requisitioned; our dead may be buried in mass graves. Along with this compulsion, there may be scarcity: too few vaccines, or not enough food or places in bunkers or on buses.

Besides the secrecy, the other reason not to put all your faith in the government is that, not surprisingly, their plans assume government is still functioning after the deluge or the bomb. That assumption is probably fair: society carries on, life carries on, even after turmoil as great as the Black Death or war. Unimaginable calamities turn out only to be blips. But what if the next one isn't? What if you are one of the last ones, the only ones?

Apart from novels and films, there is somewhere you can turn for advice: the various sects and groups readying for precisely this eventuality. There are Mormons and Seventh-Day Adventists expecting their Messiah and the tribulations that will accompany Him—the trumpets and tortures, fiery cavalry and locusts, and then the casting of the devil into the abyss for 1,000 years, as foretold in the Book of Revelation, maybe the most psychedelic vision of the end on record. There are members of the Nation of Islam planning for the visit of the "Mother Plane", and white supremacists waiting for the action of "The Turner Diaries" to begin in earnest. There is also a lively online community of more-or-less sane survivalists preparing for TEOTWAWKI. In the 1970s it was expected to result from hyperinflation, and in the 1980s from nuclear war. For a while it was going to follow the Y2K computer crunch.

Some of our challenges and needs, I read, will be broadly the same however TEOTWAWKI arrives: stockpiles of food; medicine; weapons; gold and silver (because paper currencies will have collapsed). If I have to flee London—"bug out" or "get out of Dodge" in survivalist parlance—I will need a four-wheel-drive vehicle to skirt the New Orleans-style traffic jams and road-blocks that will have overtaken the arterial highways, plus somewhere to escape to. There is, I learn, a survivalist property website offering apocalypse-ready retreats at what, given the dollar exchange rate, look like reasonable prices. I am advised to lay in chemical-protection suits, but I am sceptical. I once did a chemical-weapons training course before a hairy foreign assignment. In a moment of off-duty frankness, the phlegmatic ex-soldier instructor admitted that, if I ever really needed to, my chances of getting the kit on in time, and correctly, were close to zero.

SO WHAT WOULD you do? What would I do? Whether it's asteroid or Martian, tsunami or al-Qaeda, we will need to decide who is in our survival team. An emergency-preparedness leaflet distributed by the Australian government advises, in the section titled "children", "Keep them with you." I haven't met mine yet, but I imagine that I would, along with my partner.

Where would we go? When I was a child in a Conservative suburban household, and we pondered emergencies—such as the possible election of a Labour government—the default solution was: we'll go to Canada. My new survivalist friends recommend Idaho, for its good hunting and liberal gun laws. I fear we won't be able to reach either, nor even the Lake District, Dartmoor or some other high-elevation, small-scale British equivalent, at least not in our little urban micro-car (good for parking in the West End, less good for fording rivers).

But staying put, I realise, may be uncomfortable. A book that imagines the fate of depopulated cities informs me that it won't be long before the roofs of houses leak, gutters and drains block, pavements buckle, neglected pipes begin to burst and weeds take hold in surprising places (the narrator of "The Day of the Triffids" returns to an abandoned London to find plants "rooting in the crevices between the paving stones, springing from cracks in concrete, finding >

> lodgements even in the seats of the abandoned cars"). Anyone left alive in London will at least be spared the bears, moose, coyotes and other megafauna that would overrun Manhattan. But reindeer and wolves might get over from continental Europe, and native dogs and cats would grow increasingly wild and dangerous. There would be no one to put out fires.

Wherever we go, what will we do when we get there? A professor of disaster studies tells me that people in most developing countries are much readier for ruination than Westerners are, being better acquainted with key post-disaster skills: how to grow food and find clean water, how to make and repair shelter—and how to dispose of the dead. The typical modern British response to, say, a flood, is to do nothing, then berate the emergency services for coming late. After the invasion or eco-carnage, I fear I will number among the useless emasculated. (On a river-rafting trip in Kamchatka, in far-eastern Russia, I was delegated by our all-action guide to chop wood. I flailed around with an axe, using my stronger right arm. After about half an hour, the guide sidled up to my partner and asked "Is he left-handed?") My best hope is that the internet works long enough for me to learn how to wring chickens' necks and identify non-poisonous mushrooms, all the useful manual stuff that I've foregone in favour of latte consumption and looking at installation art. I will take a lesson from a flood victim rather more memorable than Kevin Costner in "Waterworld": I will not, like Noah in Genesis, hit the bottle and lie around naked in my tent.

Then there is the question of other people. Most visions of post-doomsday life see it, as my friend Nigel did, as a time when primal instincts are unleashed. Typically the hero of apocalyptic stories is beset by grief and loneliness, then discovers that the only thing worse than eternal solitude is the company of the other feral survivors. Sexual violence often features, sometimes combined with lurid schemes for repopulating the world. (Some American plans for the end of time, I notice, assume that one unattractive trait—litigiousness—will persist. A survivalist website warns against the risk of being sued for using excessive force against attackers. An American church has made sure its property would be secure should its officers be whisked to heaven.)

But it is also possible that—as the doom-mongering sandwich-board men exhort—TEOTWAWKI will work as a cue for virtue rather than depravity. There is some evidence to think so. British psychologists who have studied the behaviour of crowds during real disasters concluded that worries about mass, contagious panic are misplaced. United by a sense of shared fate, the psychologists report, victims tend to help each other rather than fight selfishly for the exits, and to continue observing social conventions (men holding open doors for women, pupils obeying teachers).

In fact, I'm guessing that post-apocalyptic human relations may be an extreme version of today's: a messy compound of need and suspicion, camaraderie and struggle. And my hunch is that—since I can't farm, won't make it to Canada and have no idea how to use a gun—my life after TEOTWAWKI would be a warped version of the familiar too.

LAST CHRISTMAS SOMEBODY gave me a replica of a propaganda poster that was printed in Britain during the second world war, intended for use after a putative German invasion. I plan to put it up in the delivery room when our baby is born. In white capital letters against a red background it says "KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON": utterly meaningless advice, and also probably the best and only advice. Actually, most Londoners did precisely that during the lesser shock of the Blitz. Despite the popular mythology that depicts the city huddling underground in the Tube, only a small share of Londoners ever did; many doggedly and fatalistically carried on sleeping in their own beds. The more you think about the alternatives, and the odds and risks of flight and fighting, the more sense staying at home makes, even with the weeds and the marauding cats. If I stayed, I could forage on Hampstead Heath and alphabetise my bookshelves. If I ran, made it past the roadblocks or across the Atlantic and honed my neck-wringing skills on the way, what sort of life would I have saved? Dartmoor would be muddy and overrun. Idaho would be full of survivalists. I went to Canada once, but it was closed.

And the more I think about it, the less apocalyptic the apocalypse feels. As it was for my lascivious teenage friend, The End has always been something longed for as well as dreaded, a consolation as well as an annihilation. Some have reached out for its release, encouraging it with prayer and sometimes violence: against themselves (like "Heaven's Gate") or against others (like Aum Shinrikyo). Revelation—like its prototype the Book of Daniel, with its horned beasts and doomed kings—is among other things a sketch of justice and freedom offered to the faithful in a time of trial. Even if your grievances against the world are less cosmic—a long and squashed commute, say, or an oppressive mortgage—there is something liberating about the idea of it.

So many of our ambitions and frustrations are defined competitively—including, maybe, the biggest fear, of death. The idea of dying together, all of us, in some ways seems less appalling than the thought of going alone. Having a cameo role in Armageddon would confer a kind of intergalactic meaning to the inevitable; if you happened to survive, there would be no more statuses and salaries to compare ("all the old problems", says the narrator of "The Day of the Triffids", "had been solved by one mighty slash"). But perhaps I'll think differently when our baby arrives. ■

THE
END
IS
AT HAND

SPECIAL GUIDE

REVIEWERS REVIEWED

Most of the world's critics are now showing on a screen near you. But which are really worth reading? TIM DE LISLE asks writers and editors

CRITICS OFTEN GET a bad press. They tend to be seen as show-offs—the snooty food writer in "Ratatouille" was called Anton Ego—and assassins. They get asked, "How can you be so cruel?" Well, they reply, any opinion has to be honest, and a bad review gives the good ones more force, as well as doing the punter a service. But criticism isn't really about giving a thumbs up or down: it's about capturing a piece of work and making sense of it. Reviewing is a branch of reporting.

The internet has diluted the critics' power but widened their reach. Hundreds of them are now at your fingertips. But where to begin? There is a website where you can find critics fast (metacritic.com) but it only covers America, and it's a short-cut, not a filter. So we asked leading writers and editors which critics they turn to. *Intelligent Life* is in a position to be impartial, as we don't run straight reviews, and we drew up a few rules: no members of their family, or ours; no employees or employers. The aim wasn't so much to pick winners, although one critic did get the most votes, as to pinpoint treats you may be missing. Criticism attracts some top-class writers: here are about 30 of them.

BOOKS

James Wood

The *New Yorker*, roughly once a month
www.newyorker.com

Critics aren't there to award stars or confirm what you already think—or to show off. Their job is to inform, provoke, educate and entertain. James Wood's fiction reviews are always severe and often annoying, but he has a passion for realism—brilliantly expounded in his new book "How Fiction Works" (Cape), which is both a high-minded essay and a how-to primer. ~ BLAKE MORRISON

The thrill of Wood is that he believes in criticism in the old-fashioned sense—as an art in itself, as an activity with moral weight. He moves easily from rigorous close reading, to career arcs, to the wider cultural context, and back; he is unafraid of sacred cows. ~ AIDA EDEMARIAM

John Carey

The *Sunday Times*, most weeks
www.timesonline.co.uk

Because he has the ability to make almost anything interesting and because we share some prejudices—eg, that Virginia

ILLUSTRATIONS MICK MARSTON

Woolf was wrong about Arnold Bennett and that modernism was a sneaky way of keeping art beyond the comprehension of what we shall have to call ordinary people. ~ IAN JACK

As a student, I was electrified by John Carey's lectures on Tudor England: he made history come alive as a context for literature. It's a gift that shines out of his reviews, too. He has a sharp eye for the bogus, and his frankness can seem harsh, but it is the flip side of his scrupulous honesty. ~ REBECCA WILLIS

Craig Brown

The *Mail on Sunday*, every week
(not posted on the paper's website)

Brown is the funniest writer in British journalism. But he's much more than that. His weekly lead book review for the *Mail on Sunday* is always surprising and perceptive, making telling, serious-minded points. Oh, and it's usually very funny. ~ MICK BROWN

Brown, best known as a satirist, combines a light touch with sure-handed authority. ~ SIMON GARFIELD

John Lanchester

London Review of Books, several times a year
www.lrb.co.uk/contributors/lancoi

Lanchester is a London-based novelist whose industrial-scale reading takes him into the murkiest areas of contemporary life—climate-change sceptics, subprime derivatives, Alastair Campbell. Lucid, precise and unstuffy, Lanchester emerges from his desk-bound research trips with verdicts that are satisfyingly tough and tidy. On climate change: "there is one school of thought and a few nutters". On derivatives: "the most powerful and the most complicated financial instruments ever devised". On Campbell: "a total prick". ~ ROBERT BUTLER

Michiko Kakutani

The *New York Times*, about once a week
www.nytimes.com/

Not because I think she's always right but because she's forthright—not afraid, not compromised by friendships with writers, publishers and literary agents. I've never seen her at any literary event. Among book reviewers (many of whom are also book writers), this makes her rare. ~ IAN JACK

Nicholas Lezard

The *Guardian*, every Saturday
books.guardian.co.uk/review/

I've been a dedicated reader of Lezard's paperback choice ever since reading a column of his on Sven Lindqvist's "Exterminate All the Brutes" (Granta). It was a discovery—a remarkable piece of writing that really influenced my thinking. I still recommend it to friends, and I've remained a fan of Lezard's engagingly candid style. ~ JO GLANVILLE

Adam Begley

The *New York Observer*, roughly once a month
www.observer.com/node/36002

Imagine the New York uncle you never had—braces, bow-tie, the dish on everyone who walks into the room—and you have Adam Begley, the *New York Observer*'s literary editor, who rolls up his sleeves every month or so to write his tipsheet on whatever masterwork is doing the rounds: De Lillo, Updike, Roth, Coetzee. He is informed without showing off, feline without being catty and never lets his nose for good prose throw him off the hunt for great story-telling. ~ TOM SHONE

>

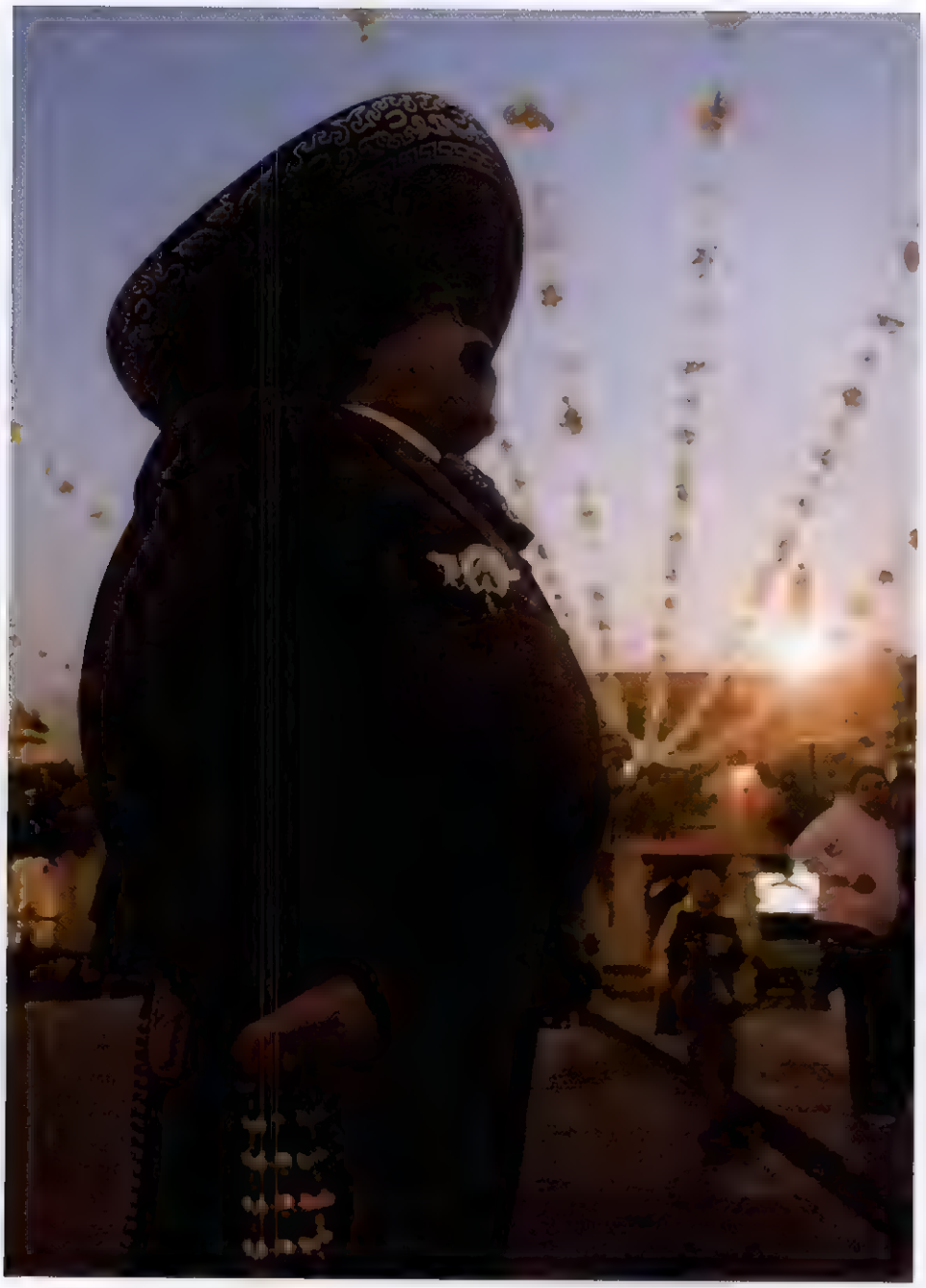
MARIACHIS IN THE PLAZA GARIBALDI ARE WATCHED OVER BY ST CECILIA, PATRON SAINT OF MUSICIANS
PHOTOGRAPHS *ADAM WISEMAN*

Mexican notes

Mariachi music runs on tobacco, tequila and a rich sense of Mexico's past. In its thrall, HENRY TRICKS first kissed his wife

THESE DAYS, VISITORS to Mexico City are rarely encouraged to go to Plaza Garibaldi, the square where for almost a century Mexico's mariachi musicians have sung ardently to the public of love, loss and betrayal. People get near to it. The rest of the city centre, with its baroque palaces, ancestral temples, and majestic *Zócalo* has been polished up to appeal to the clean-living sort (as if by magic, street merchants have been swept away and the main square, this Christmas, became an ice rink).

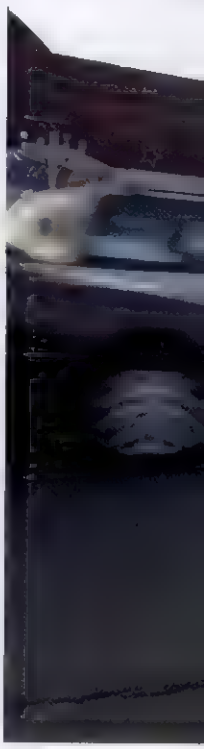
But Garibaldi, just a few blocks away, feels like the same country in an older, less worldly, century. It is reckless and messy. It adjoins a neighbourhood notorious for drug gangs and cheap brothels. And it peddles music, at 100 pesos ($10) a song, dragged nostalgically out of Mexico's past, celebrating the lovers and drunks, sinners and misfits to whom the plaza has long been abandoned. >



A MARIACHI WAITS TO BE HIRED IN THE PLAZA GARIBALDI

TRYING TO FLAG DOWN PROSPECTIVE CLIENTS IN THE EVENING TRAFFIC

MARIACHI OUTFITS ARE ORNATELY EMBROIDERED AND EMBELLISHED



are painted on the wall above my head. The dipsomaniac's bitter refrain only adds to the chill.

"You, what do you know about
life on the town?
You, what do you know about passions?
When you hear a mariachi
you don't even understand the songs."

And then I find what I am looking for, in the most furtive corner of the salon. There is a flicker of warmth and laughter in the eyes of a small group of mariachis that gleams like the gold in their teeth. Their elbows swing as they play, trumpets ring, and bows dance gaily up and down the violin strings. In the midst of them, an elderly man, with grey hair and a distinguished, senatorial look, has a beautiful woman, barely 30, in his arms. It is clear they are both a song and a dance away from becoming lovers—at least for tonight—and they are alone, except for their accompanists. The musicians beam, complicit in the giddiness of the couple, the hint of adultery, the defiance of convention, all stoked up by their songs. It is a state of inebriated ecstasy I savour deeply. In the thrall of such music, in this plaza, I first kissed my wife.

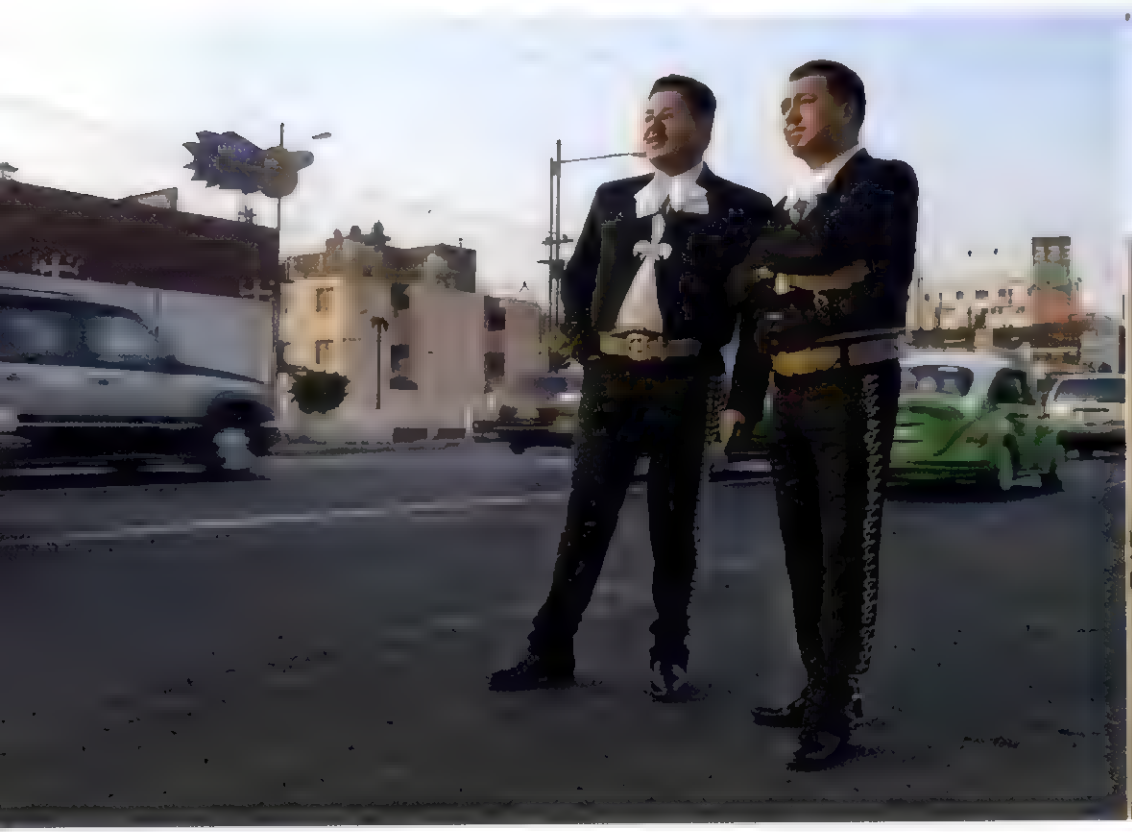
Plaza Garibaldi, and mariachi music, can do strange things to a person, not least in encouraging them along the road to "martyrmony", as Mexicans (my wife included) jokingly call marriage. Not far across town is a shrine to St Jude Thaddeus, the Catholic saint of lost causes, which causes traffic jams in Mexico City on the 28th of each month because of the throngs gathering outside looking for hope where there is none. Garibaldi is the secular equivalent, open every night of the year. It drains the forlorn of cash, much as the church does, and snarls the traffic on the six-lane highway that runs alongside it, as good-looking mariachis run beside the cars touting for business, their sharp-toed boots clattering along the tarmac.

But it is the antithesis of the church. Whether down on their luck, or high as a kite on tequila, Mexicans make their way to Garibaldi to carouse, to woo, to drown in sorrow, to serenade in song. At its worst, it stinks of desperation and even the police seem to have given up patrolling it. But at its most vigorous, on

> At the dead of night, it can be a window into the darker, more misanthropic side of the Mexican soul, the part that careens at times, like the music itself, from tears of ecstasy to agony, anger and grief. As a few friends and I head gingerly to El Tenampa, a bar that since the 1920s has been a beacon of mariachi music to revellers across the capital, there are two glue-addled street children, tearing at each other's hair. The cluster of mariachis has thinned, and those that remain are not the strutting peacocks that I remember filling the square with song and gaiety in the past. They have gone home. Those left are bow-legged, bent-backed; their teeth rotted from tequila and stained by tobacco.

In the bar, a singer or two carries a whisper of virtuosity, but behind him the ageing musicians wear anoraks over their silver-studded uniforms to keep out the cold. They struggle to stop yawning. It is, indeed, late and bitterly cold. I walk down the long, zinc bar inside El Tenampa on which coal stoves used to burn, warming the grenadine punch that the mariachis drank in the early days. The lyrics of "Mi Tenampa", the song dedicated to the bar by the greatest mariachi of all, José Alfredo Jiménez,

When you hire a **mariachi band**, you throw yourself into the songs, scorn trite feelings and sing until your throat burns for **tequila**. I've seen listeners so drunk they tip over backwards on the high notes



the last Friday of each month, when workers have cashed their pay cheques and have bundles of 100-peso notes to peel off, and the dying sun sets off the ochre in their flushed cheeks, Garibaldi is a carnival of sound and colour. With shoulders back, and barrel chests threatening to burst the silver buttons on their waistcoats, sombrero-wearing singers bellow out their "ay ay ays" to the open air, competing with rivals across the square. They summon up all the charisma they can muster to bring fresh life to songs Mexicans have been listening to from mellifluous screen gods such as Pedro Infante since the 1940s. It is tough competition. Trumpets, violins, guitars and the baseline plod of the *guitarrón* create such dissonance that it sounds like an orchestra in a permanent state of tuning up. But when you hire a mariachi band, you don't expect chamber music. You throw yourself into the songs, scorn trite feelings and sing until your throat burns for tequila. It's a messy process. I've seen listeners (and mariachis) so drunk they tip over backwards on the high notes. What's particularly curious about it in today's Mexico, where you are as likely to be a Starbucks' *barista* as a cowboy, is how powerfully the music still resonates. A song about a broken-down gambler crawling back to his hometown in the state of Guanajuato starts:

"Life is worthless
it is worth nothing
it always starts off in tears
and crying is how it ends.
That's why, in this world, life is worth nothing."

The first few notes rarely fail to moisten the eyes of a friend of mine who is a dentist, even though he hasn't lived in Guanajuato for 20 years, and would far prefer to own an iPhone than to gamble his money on a cockfight. Likewise, the complex cantina psychology of "El Rey", one of José Alfredo's most treasured songs, makes even mild-mannered Mexican bureaucrats clench their fists, goddamit:

"I don't have a throne, or a queen,
and no one understands me,
but I still am the king."

Why does this music, known as *ranchera* after the rugged farming life that it harks back to, maintain such a hold over the Mexican pysche more than 100 years after its first protagonists tramped into Mexico City from the provinces to serenade the dictator, Porfirio Díaz, in 1905? In one of the world's biggest cities, how has this nostalgia for a rural idyll, embodied by fresh-faced cowboys and cowgirls with few of the Indian features of *mestizo* (mixed-race) Mexico, endured for so long?

To answer those questions, I am pointed to a small stall on a street running off Garibaldi, where Juan Mercado, a part- >

IMMACULATELY DRESSED MUSICIANS COME OUT TO BE HIRED AS EVENING FALLS

INSIDE EL TENAMPA, THE BAR THAT HAS BEEN AT THE CENTRE OF MARIACHI LIFE SINCE THE 1920S

> time photographer, does a brisk business selling violin and guitar strings for 20 pesos apiece. In the course of business, he has talked to most mariachis who have played in the square, and knows their stories. He sells me an old CD, with a grainy picture of four musicians in ***huarache*** sandals and muslin shirts on the cover. It is, the cover says, "the Very First Mariachi Recordings", done by American record companies in 1908-09. "El Periquito", the first song, is a cheeky ***son*** that, to me, unconsciously echoes Rome's mischievous poet, Catullus ("My Lady's Pet Sparrow is Dead"):

"I like your Parakeet, ma'am
because of its yellow colour
perhaps you could sell it to me
without your husband knowing
Larala, la la
larala la la."

"Limoncito" is also a bucolic gem, with none of the bravura or brass instruments that became the hallmarks of mariachi music a few decades later:

"As I passed by your window,
you threw a lemon at me.
The juice hit my face;
the blow struck my heart…Lemon, lemon,
born by the riverside,
if you no longer love me,
a great romance has been lost…"

Mercado puts me in touch with Hermes Rafael, a charming historian and poet, who has written more about the arrival of mariachis in Mexico City than anyone, and helped rescue many *sones* from dusty oblivion.

Rafael reminds me that it was a year after those lilting songs were recorded that Mexico was plunged into revolutionary turmoil. For most of that bloody decade, the sweep of revolutionary armies across Mexico broke down some of the regional barriers created by the Sierra Madre, the mountainous dividing line that runs down western Mexico. Music travelled too.

By the 1920s the capital had begun to swell with newcomers from the provinces as Mexico began its long journey to industrialisation, and more mariachi troupes arrived in Mexico City from the western state of Jalisco, where the music has its roots. One enterprising ***Jaliscense***, sensing their popularity and recalling the festive cantinas of his home state, founded El Tenampa, the bar in Plaza Garibaldi. For the purposes of mariachi music, says Rafael, it was perfect. There were no government offices nearby, and no church. "The number one enemy of the mariachi was the church," he tells me. At about the same time, the religious wars in Mexico that Graham Greene writes about in "The Power and the Glory" tore through the state of Jalisco. Some mariachis went home to fight. Others fled from their villages to Mexico City. With more than one band to play in El Tenampa, they spilled out into the square. So, the Garibaldi tradition was born.

The mistrust between mariachi and church is historically unfair perhaps, because it was Catholic missionaries from Spain who first brought stringed instruments, such as the guitar-like *vihuela*, to accompany the drums and pipes of the conquered people. But the antipathy dates back centuries, and is documented in a marvellous book recently published in Mexico, "El Mariachi", by Jesús Jáuregui, an anthropologist. He cites the first written evidence of the word mariachi in an angry letter written by a Mexican priest to his bishop in May 1852. It complains of the "fandangos" that have corrupted the Easter celebrations in his village, notably "men going about on foot and on horseback shouting as if they were mad on account of the wine that they have drunk." He continues: "We all know the crimes and excesses that are committed as part of these revelries, that generally in these parts are known as mariachis."

That letter, as well as other documents dug up by Jáuregui, may help dispel one of the most common myths about

The shrill, trumpet-blasting celebrations of machismo, womanising and tequila...still strike a chord among Mexicans

mariachis. It has long been believed that the name derives from the French word *mariage*, and was coined by Frenchmen who came to Mexico under the Napoleonic emperor Maximilian I between 1864 and his execution in 1867. Jáuregui and Rafael say the evidence firmly disproves this, and that the root of the word is more likely indigenous.

"El Mariachi" also paints a compelling picture of how those gentle *sones* in a few decades grew into the shrill, trumpet-blasting celebrations of machismo, womanising and tequila that still strike such a chord among Mexicans today.

In a way, it was cleverly contrived. Lázaro Cárdenas, the charismatic 1930s president whose name is given to the highway leading to Garibaldi, ruled in an era when people's regional identities were gradually enveloped by a national one. It was a time when the values of the 1910-17 revolution, such as land, liberty and patriotism, were being sentimentalised in Mexican cinema. Transmission by radio and cinema of the *ranchera* style, celebrating the simple, traditional life of the peasant and his regional roots, gave the new urbanites a means of easing their sense of dislocation. It also worked in reverse, connecting the peasantry with the modernising sounds of Mexico City. The movie idols, such as Jorge Negrete and Pedro Infante, were tall, fair-skinned and cocky, investing them with an international stature that darker-skinned Mexicans quietly coveted. And they wore dashing charro suits with silver embroidery, which made them look prosperous.

No wonder Mexicans lapped it up. The music gave them a strong sense of their own identity, and played perfectly with the message of Cardenas's Institutional Revolutionary Party, which ruled from 1929-2000. Born in the era of the black-and-white charro movie, the party's ability to help define what it meant to be Mexican–its peasants were as artfully romanticised as its industrial workers–kept it in power until the internet age. Mariachi music has lasted even longer.

In the meantime, the composer, José Alfredo, arrived on the scene, working at a bar just off Garibaldi. An unschooled writer of at least 600 songs, he took mariachi music out of its traditional, rustic setting, and made women his main theme–cause of so much sublime happiness and base misery. He wrote from the heart–and from the bottle–and gave Mexicans music to carry them through the high-growth, giddy era of the 1960s, when nation-building was giving way to a more individualist ethos. Legend has it that his biggest hit "Ella" which starts:

> *"I'm tired of begging her*
> *I'm tired of telling her that without her I'll die of sadness..."*

was inspired by a real love that led him to write a follow-up, "Yo":

> *"I'm drunk*
> *I'm still drinking*
> *because destiny has changed my luck.*
> *Your tenderness means nothing to me now*
> *My heart has forgotten you for ever."*

Rafael puts the end of the authentic era of the mariachis at about the time of Alfredo's death (of a ruined liver) in 1973. He crawled out of his hospital bed to compose one last song, "Gracias", to his fans. In it, he thanked them for their applause, which meant so much more to him than money. He'd rather have two hearts than money, he sang.

But his music didn't die, even if the compositions of his successors grew ever lighter and flimsier. One afternoon last Christmas, as I crawled in a taxi through the impenetrable traffic of Mexico City, I found a handful of mariachis with greying hair and handsome faces, flagging down customers near Garibaldi. I stopped. They were seven brothers, and they set up their band around the time Alfredo was in his prime more than 40 years ago. Their band has several names, but the one I liked best was El Mariachi Diplomatico. During the 1970s and 1980s they flew around the world representing the Mexican government abroad, and they have photos of themselves in an array of beautifully tailored charro suits in the Swiss Alps, in Berlin, in Spain, in Saudi Arabia (where they had to pour away a case of tequila on arrival).

They are down on their luck, however. In the interminable years of economic hardship since the 1980s, the tender nostalgia of mariachi music has increasingly given way to the cynicism of home-grown ***narco corridas***, celebrating the exploits of drug lords and crooked cops. Seven-piece bands are expensive to keep going; the soles of boots wear out; the suits fray. And mariachis have flourished all over the world, from Japan to Germany, so why fly them in any more? (On my wife's birthday in October, I discovered a five-piece mariachi band living in Clapham North, London. They burst in from the street and raised the roof.)

Graciously, however, this resolute band of "diplomatic" mariachis invited my family and me to a breakfast gathering of textile unions on January 7th, the 101st anniversary of a massacre of weavers by Porfirio Díaz's forces which helped provoke the revolution at the start of the 20th century. In the 21st century, it was a touching, but incongruous performance: a troupe of 60-year-old mariachis, playing in front of a mural of bullet-spattered workers, to the few dozen militant unionists who had bothered to show up. In their heyday, both unions and mariachis helped define modern Mexico. Now, as they tried to rally each other's spirits with bursts of song and ricochets of applause, it seemed like the echo of a vivid, but vanishing, past. ■

LEFT A MUSICIAN SWEEPS THE PAVEMENT OUTSIDE EL TENAMPA

Beautiful ideas start in the palm of your hand.

1995: CCD-TRV90
First Handycam design to feature a flip-out rotating LCD screen for more flexible shooting.

1996: DSC-F1
The first ever Cyber-shot, incorporating a 180 degree rotating lens/flash body.

2003: DSC-T1
Slim Cyber-shot featuring a sliding lens cover that doubles as a power switch.

1989: CCD-TR55
The first generation Handycam heralded a new era of go-anywhere personal video shooting.

1999: DSC-F505
Dominated by its high-quality lens, this groundbreaking Cyber-shot design helped energise the digital camera market.

2007: DSLR-A700
Weighing just 690g, this advanced α digital SLR camera allows responsive one-handed operation.

SONY

like.no.other

Sony design shapes an infinite world of creative possibilities.

You instantly know when something feels just right. It's an emotional connection that's forged at the first glimpse and the very first touch.

Seeing the world in exciting new ways depends on your hands as much as your eyes. And a camera that fits perfectly in your hand becomes a natural extension of your own creative personality.

Fusing form and function, Sony cameras have always proved that beauty flows effortlessly from a sense of clear purpose.

At Sony, we're endlessly fascinated by the infinite complexity and creative possibilities of the human hand. And you'll see how that inspiration has shaped the lifestyles of creative photographers for more than 2 decades.

Originally launched in 1985, Handycam was the world's first consumer camcorder that gave people the thrill of creating their own movies – any time, any place.

With Cyber-shot, Sony introduced an innovative rotating lens that allows anyone to take better-looking self portraits with confidence.

And now with the α series of digital SLR cameras, Sony makes extraordinary imaging quality and limitless creative possibilities accessible to photographers of all abilities.

It's a clear demonstration of Sony's unmatched heritage and continual refinement to deliver unique imaging experiences.

But while our design philosophy is constantly evolving, Sony's core values remain as true today as they did 2 decades ago. You'll see it expressed in our "Creator's DNA" – an understanding that true beauty happens when you focus on the essential elements of form and function.

True creative expression starts in your own hands. Reach out and touch it with Sony.

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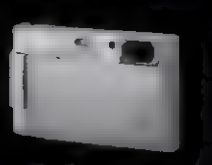
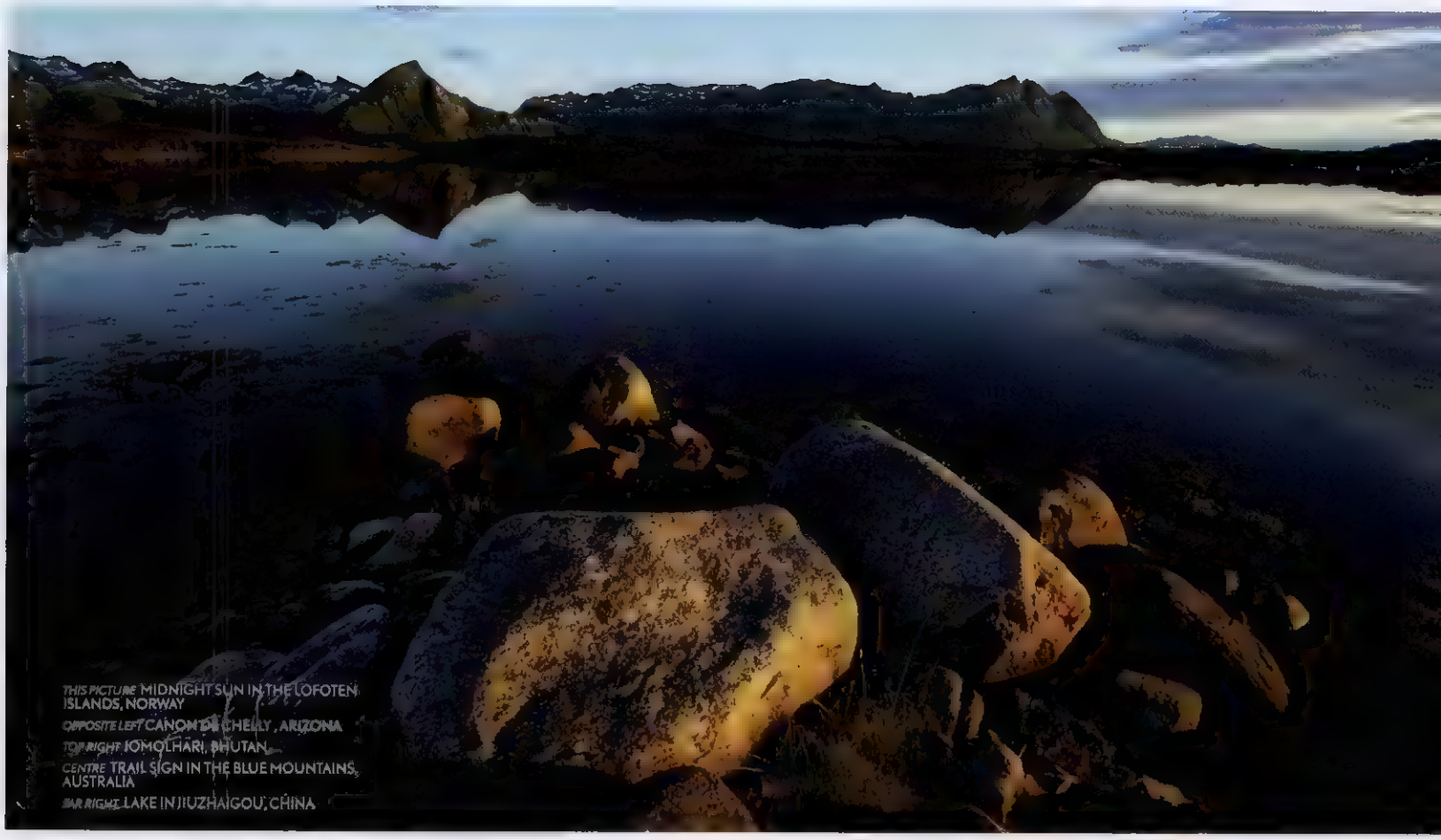
HANDYCAM.



Cyber-shot

α

Creator's DNA



THIS PICTURE MIDNIGHT SUN IN THE LOFOTEN ISLANDS, NORWAY
OPPOSITE LEFT CANON DE CHELLY, ARIZONA
TOP RIGHT JOMOLHARI, BHUTAN
CENTRE TRAIL SIGN IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS, AUSTRALIA
BAR RIGHT LAKE IN JIUZHAIGOU, CHINA

OUT THERE

Walking all over the world

WILLIAM MACKESY picks ten of his favourite treks

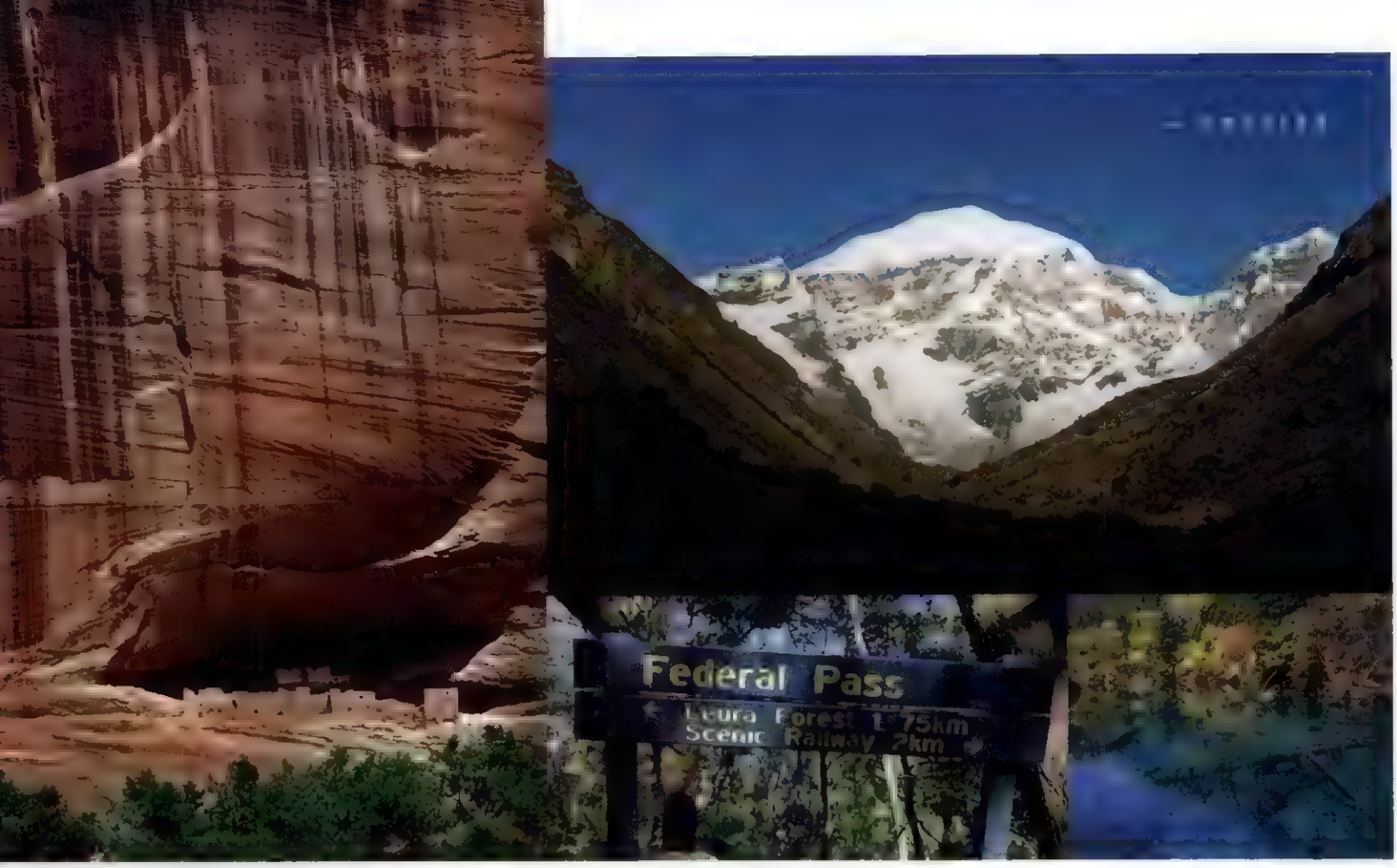
SOME PEOPLE COLLECT art, others cars or wine. I am a bagger of exotic walks. My ambition is to identify and write a book about the 100 best walks in the world—although I'm aware that, because of the size of the task, it may well have to be published posthumously. I love the quiet, unsynthetic joy of striding through exceptional places, with days given over to free-form rumination. It brings a soaring intensity of feeling that is rejuvenating and energising.

In order to get definitive about the best walks, I have been musing about their essential ingredients. There are thousands of beautiful walks, so beauty can only be a starting point. It seems to me that a walk is outstanding because of its charisma, usually combined with a natural wonder or literary or historical associations. Of course, people will have their own opinions—some will shudder that Mounts Kilimanjaro and Fuji fail to make the final cut because of their painful altitude and crowding.

It's no surprise that Nepal, Peru and America have an embarrassment of rich walks; but China is way ahead, for me, thanks in large part to the wonders of the Tibetan world. These are ten of my favourite walks—so far.

MOUNT KAILASH, TIBET: the world's best walk, by my reckoning. A three day pilgrimage around this sacred mountain is accompanied by nomads in their sheepskin coats and turquoise and coral beads, some of them prostrating the entire 53km circuit. From the Bharka plain, the trail climbs a long, glaciated gorge around Kailash's western flank, finishing with a night under the mountain's striated northern face. The next day labours up to the 5,600-metre (18,500ft) pass, festooned in prayer flags, then drops past an eerie turquoise lake to meander back to the plain. Along the way you pass monasteries, *stupas* and prostration points. It is a profoundly spiritual, moving place.
Three very tough days; basic camping with support team

TORAJALAND, SULAWESI, INDONESIA: in the remote mountains of this spice island, a rich culture has retained its traditions and graceful, boat-like houses. Either you walk through rice terraces and villages, or take to the hills, crossing the jungled ridges from valley to valley. You may join a festival or funeral with Homeric scenes of fire and feast.
Straightforward day walks from hotels in the valleys; or tougher overnight treks, staying in old wooden houses on stilts.



JOMOLHARI, BHUTAN: the trek with everything, taking you up ancient tracks through villages in valleys that retain their Tibetan Buddhist culture, then climbing through forest before emerging to summer pastures at the foot of the sacred 7,316-metre Jomolhari. The route then crosses two high passes, past two lonely *dzongs* (forts) in desolate landscape, before dropping back to the delights of the valleys
Seven demanding days; cold nights in tents, but wonderful support teams.

JIUZHAIGOU, SICHUAN, CHINA: deep in the mountains of western China lies this World Heritage Site: a gorge of bright mineral lakes and weird geology, set in mixed forest beneath broken peaks. You walk beside streams gurgling, often in wide multiple strands, over calcinated beds, cataracts and waterfalls of frozen stone; you pass still, little lakes that range from emerald to palest turquoise
Straightforward day walks; hotels outside national park.

UMFOLOZI WALKING SAFARI, SOUTH AFRICA: nothing brings you closer to nature red in tooth and claw than tramping through scrub and long grass in which big beasts lurk—rhinos, elephants, lions, buffalo. You may watch a lioness training her cubs to stalk antelope. At night, the bush is loudly alive as you cower in your tent
Two long days or more; simple camping with support team.

FEDERAL PASS, BLUE MOUNTAINS, AUSTRALIA: the sandstone cliffs around Blackheath are justly famous, with their panoramas across forested hills that fade into a blue haze. This trail follows the ledge halfway down that winds for several vertiginous miles around the vagaries of the rockface to a cool, clear pool below the Wentworth falls. A flight of steps cut into the rock gets you up to the path back along the cliff top
Moderate day walk; hotels in Blackheath or elsewhere.

LOCHNAGAR, SCOTLAND: this walk climbs from the foot of the glacial Loch Muick to a horseshoe of crags around a tarn. The ridge has views of the Cairngorms and the moorlands of the Balmoral estate. A track drops, beside waterfalls, down to the royal lodge on the shore of Loch Muick
Strenuous day walk; hotels etc, locally.

THE LOFOTEN ISLANDS, NORWAY: this chain of granite mountain-islands was carved by the last ice age into spikes and sheer cliffs gashed by fjords. Lying well inside the Arctic Circle, this is harsh but beautiful scenery. Brightly coloured fishing villages nestle in coves. You can enjoy the coastline or gasp at some of the world's most thrilling views from the ridges
Day walks or longer, of varying difficulty; stay in hotels or atmospheric converted fishermen's cabins.

ROUTE OF THE VOLCANOES, LA PALMA, CANARY ISLANDS: an extraordinary trail along the volcanic central spine of this less visited island. Weird vegetation and craters (several recently active), and the Atlantic sparkling thousands of feet below
Long day walk; hotels around the island.

CANYON DE CHELLY, ARIZONA, UNITED STATES: you can fall into this canyon before you realise you are there: sheer, water-smoothed red-sandstone walls drop several hundred feet to the gravelly bottom. A trail winds down a jumbled side-valley to its glory, an ancient Anasazi pueblo perched on a high ledge in the canyon wall
Moderate day walk; hotels in the area.

For more information (including my preliminary top 100 walks) and to nominate your favourite walks, go to www.walkopedia.net

BEING THERE

Marrakech

When RICHARD ALLEMAN fell for a house in Marrakech, he fell for a whole way of life

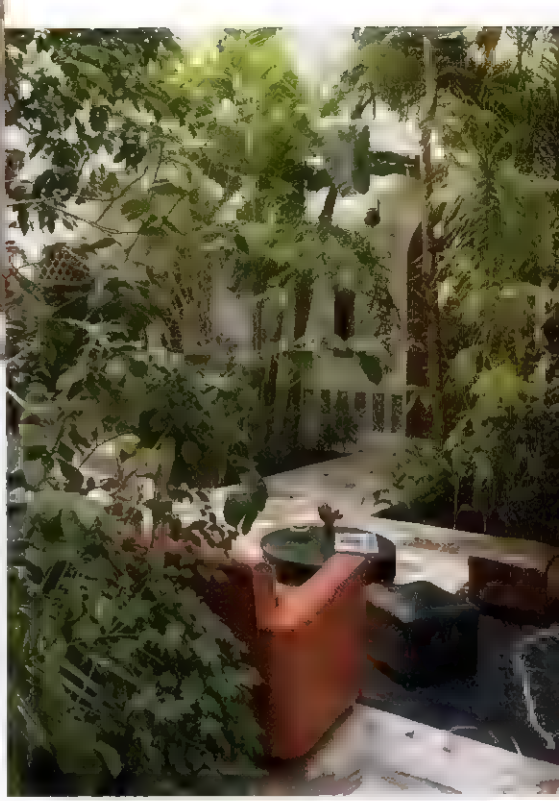
I SPENT A lot of time in Morocco in the 1970s, but hadn't been back for decades when I wound up in Marrakech in 2002 to research a story on the city's renaissance. Although much has changed in the intervening years (the city has quadrupled in size for one thing), I still find myself taken by the throbbing Place Jemaa El Fna with its acrobats and storytellers, the souks with their exotic sights and smells, the snow-capped Atlas Mountains, the sunshine and the charm of the Moroccans. At the same time, I am amazed by the transformation of the ancient medina, where once-derelict mansions with courtyards (riads) are now chic hotels and sumptuous private residences, thanks to low prices as well as recent changes in Moroccan law that have made it easier for foreigners to buy property.

Indeed, during my recce, I succumb to a case of riad fever myself. So rather than chill out on my final day in Marrakech, as I'd planned, I spend it with an estate agent looking at properties. They are all enormous wrecks needing what to me looks like years of work; and by the end of the day, I have pretty much put my Lord of the Riad fantasy to rest. But before saying what I think will be a final goodbye to the agent, I ask him if by chance there are any small houses in the medina for sale. As it happens, he knows of one, but since it has only four rooms he figured it would be too puny for a European. I ask to see it anyway and despite its psychedelic blue and yellow interior, its cracked-tile patio, and its crumbling staircase, this little pad "speaks" to me, and when I

TOP STALLS IN THE PLACE JEMAA EL FNA, THE VAST MAIN SQUARE OF MARRAKECH, WITH THE ATLAS MOUNTAINS IN THE DISTANCE

ABOVE THE SQUARE BY NIGHT

PHOTOGRAPHS *DYLAN THOMAS*



find out the price it virtually screams. When I head back to London the next morning, I have made an offer, signed papers and left a deposit.

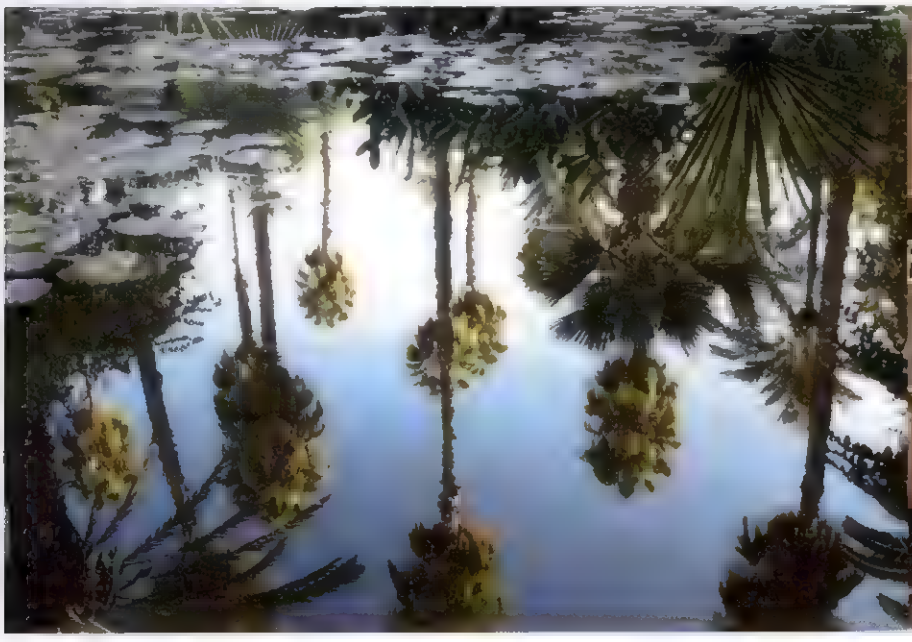
Between buying your house and moving into it takes a solid year, if you're lucky—I was, because of Catherine Neri-le Bourzec, a talented French decorator, who did up one of the riad hotels I like. She loves my "micro-riad" and puts together an enthusiastic team that includes Nawal, a young Moroccan woman architect, and Mourad, a salt-of-the-earth, super-reliable Marrakshi contractor. Soon you are consumed by the excitement of redoing your riad and schedule your life around frequent hops to Marrakech for site inspections to watch it take shape. You also find yourself a member of an exclusive club of ex-pats who are doing the same. You meet at cafés and restaurants, bump into one another in the airport, and trade stories of *tadlakt* (polished plaster) and bathroom fixtures, permit and title problems, baksheesh etiquette, delays and disasters.

Finally, you move in and for the first couple of weeks your house is like some wonderful new toy. You spend hours trying out every room at every time of day. You delight in the birdsong on your terrace in the morning, the distant drums and flutes from the Place Jemaa El Fna in the evening, and the wails of the muezzins. You imagine long winter evenings finally reading Proust by a fire in your shiny new *tadlakt* fireplace.

But there's little time for Proust because you quickly discover that you have to deal with the mundane demands of your new house—the leaking fountain, the dangerous stairs (on which a friend slipped and nearly broke her neck), plus bills, banks, taxes, insurance—all of which are endlessly complicated in a country that seems to have inherited the worst of French and Arabic bureaucratic traditions.

Then there are all your friends whose visits require that you not only play the gracious host but also double as tour guide, translator, shopping and shipping consultant. At first you are happy to share your adopted country with them, but eventually you tire of the souk, the hot new restaurants (often mediocre and overpriced), the daytrips to Essaouira on the Atlantic, and the overnights to the desert on the other side of the Atlas. >

OUTSIDE THE CITY WALLS
A COURTYARD IN THE RIAD EL FENN
REFLECTIONS IN THE MAJORELLE GARDENS
AN APARTMENT BUILDING IN GUELIZ



> Ultimately, much as you love your friends, you arrange for them to stay when you are not there, leaving them detailed suggestions for their visit.

Finally, you must contend with the expatriate social whirl, with its constant round of parties and *apéros*, with everyone showing off their new houses while complaining about how Marrakech is being ruined by all the foreigners buying properties. There are two main ex-pat groups: the French and the British. Often, there is no love lost between the two, since the French still think of Morocco as their "protectorate" and resent the Anglo invasion, whereas the British feel morally superior to the French because for a change they aren't the colonial baddies. As an American based in London who speaks French, I'm not quite sure where I fit into this complicated hierarchy.

If there's any label I covet, it's that of insider. I love simply wandering around my neighbourhood, speaking a little Arabic here and there, as I get to know the hole-in-the-wall grocers, the produce stalls, the internet cafés and the labyrinthine layout of the medina, where every journey from A to B is an adventure and where you are assaulted by more smiles and *bonjours* in half an hour than you get in a year on the streets of London.

And when the medina feels too claustrophobic and I tire of dodging the streams of tour groups and motorbikes, I branch out and discover another Marrakech that lies a few miles down the orange-tree-edged Avenue Mohammed V in the quarter known as Guéliz. Built by the French in the 1920s, this *ville nouvelle*, with its leafy streets and rose-coloured art-deco villas and apartment buildings, is a breath of fresh air. It is also exotic, in its own quirky way: a faded outpost of French colonial style and culture, which has now been gentrified by modern young Moroccans and hip Europeans whom you'll see lunching at sleek minimalist cafés like Kechmara and Café 16 or on the great verandah of Café de la Poste, a throwback to French Indochine with its wicker furniture and ceiling fans.

One of my favourite spots in modern Marrakech is a place called Marjane, a vast American-style superstore on the outskirts of Guéliz with aisle after aisle of electronics, appliances, bedding, furniture, food, and in a corner a large selection of spirits, which must be paid for at a special cash register. You see an amazing mix of shoppers—from men in djellabas and women in hijabs to the usual jeans and T-shirt set, all looking for the same bargains.

Somehow, in Marrakech, even the most banal activities—like going to the supermarket—verge on the exotic. And that is the ultimate joy of living here—being part of this incredible rush of traditions, dress, nationalities, beliefs, eras that all co-exist. In the space of a few hours you can travel from the Middle Ages to the 21st century with a stop in colonial France en route. And afterwards you can savour it all in your own hideaway with its tinkling fountain and plant-filled terrace. And who knows, one evening you might even find time to light that fire, put on a classical CD, and give "Swann's Way" a whirl. ■

INSIDE TRACK

STAY **Riad Hayati** handsome, understated *maison d'hôtes* with three doubles and a new private garden suite and plunge pool superb cook from €180 *27 Derb Bouderba, Riad Zitoun J'did www riadhayat com*

Noir d'Ivoire style-setting medina residence with ten glamorous rooms, including three new suites with private terraces and jacuzzis, from €180 *31 Derb J did, Bab Doukkala, www noir d-ivoire com*

Riad El Fenn the domain of Richard Branson's sister, Vanessa, now encompasses three adjacent medina mansions with marble courtyards roof terraces, swimming pools and a screening room, 18 rooms and suites, from €270 *2 Derb Moulay Ab du ah Ben Hezz an, Bab El Ksour, www riadelfenn com*

EAT **Grand Café de la Poste** *Place du 16 Novembre Gue z Te 024 43 30 38*

Kechmara *3 Rue de la Liberté, Guéliz Tel 024 42 25 32*

Café 16 *Marrakech P aza off 18 Place du 16 Novembre, Guéliz Tel 024 33 96 70*

Café du Livre: cosy upstairs hideaway to eat, read, go online, or work on your nove *44 Rue Tarik Ben Ziad Guéliz Tel 024 43 21 49*

Le Tanjia excellent Moroccan food in a townhouse in the Mellah (Jewish quarter). *14 Derb J'did, Mel ah Tel 024 38 38 36*

Bô Zin beautiful Zen gardens. *3 5km Route de l'Our ka Tel 024 38 80 12*

DRINK **Kosybar**: this pretty restaurant's rooftop lounge has cool music and dramatic views of the ruined 16th-century Baddi Palace *47 Place des Ferblantiers (ironmongers' souk), Mellah*

Jardins de la Koutoubia with cocktails hard to find in the medina, the piano bar of this hotel on the Place Jemaa El Fna is a find. *26 rue de la Koutoubia*

Le Comptoir: long-time top hang-out with restaurant, bar, lounges and belly-dancers *Avenue Echouada, Hivernage*

Afric 'n Chic: funky night spot, small dance-floor and often live music. *6 rue Oum Errabia, Guéliz*

SHOP **Atika**: TOD'S-like loafers in lots of leathers and colours, from £25 *34 rue de la Liberté Guel z*

Place Vendome last word in leather—wal ets, bags, jackets, luggage, suede shirts and skirts *141 avenue Mohammed V, Gué iz*

SPA **Les Bains de Marrakech**, stunning hammam with range of treatments *2 Derb Sedra, Bab Agnaou, Kasbah, lesbainsdemarrakech com*

LEFT A HOLE-IN-THE-WALL SHOP IN THE OLD MEDINA
RIGHT TAKING A BREAK OUTSIDE THE CAFE DE LA POSTE
BELOW LOOKING DOWN FROM THE RESTAURANT AT KOSYBAR

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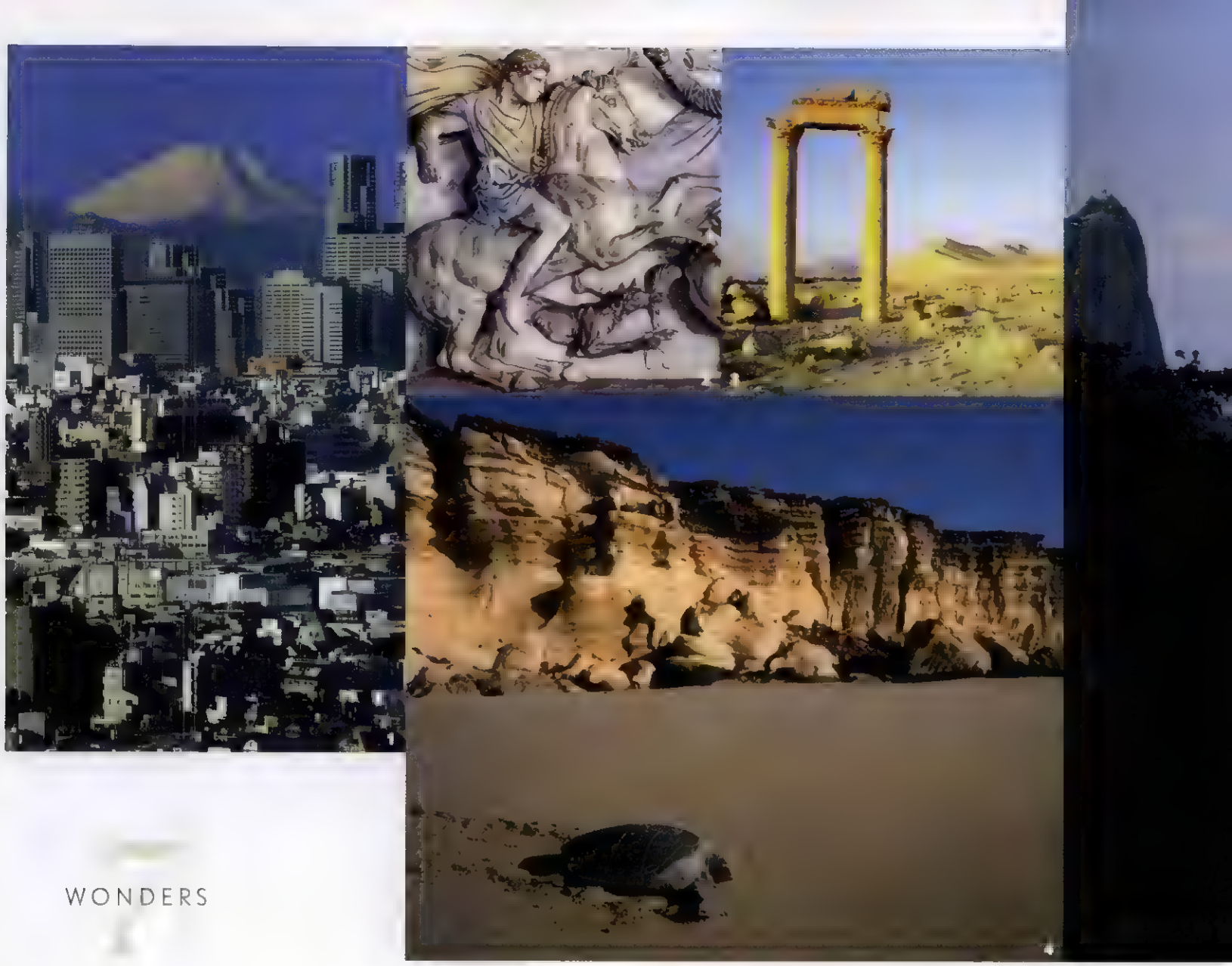
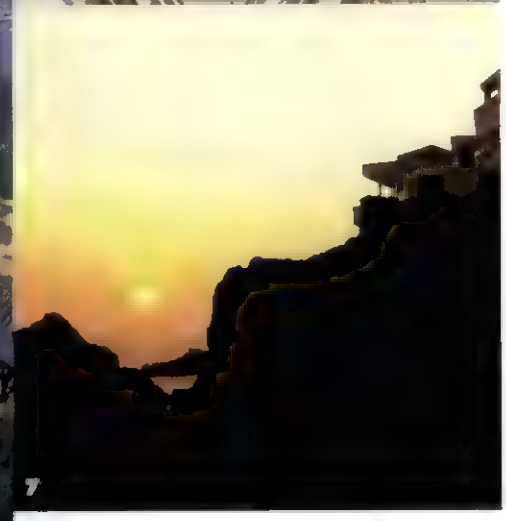


Carlos Ghosn

Brazilian-born, Lebanese-raised, French-educated, Carlos Ghosn made his name as the man who saved Nissan, the Japanese carmaker. Now also chief executive at Renault, he tells EDWARD CARR about the seven wonders of his world

1 VIEW From Motoazabu to Mount Fuji
I used to see this view every day when I woke up. At 5 o'clock in the morning, the sun starts to rise and the light is practically horizontal. Mount Fuji is pink and in winter you have a very blue sky. Before you is Tokyo's mix of modern and traditional; of strong, big buildings and small wooden houses; of big avenues and very small streets. The city is changing around you but there is the constancy and beauty of the mountain. When you are in the middle half of your life, you are more sea than mountain; and when you are older, you are more mountain than sea. I feel that I am starting to move to the mountain.

2 WORK OF ART The sarcophagus of Alexander the Great
Alexander the Great's sarcophagus shows scenes from his life and battles. The stonework is like lace. Think of the work and the passion behind what has been done, the beauty of it, the material and the colours. There is the prestige of Alexander too. He was one of the first rulers who thought about mixing cultures. He left Greece when he was very young and, even though he was a warrior and the son of a king, he embraced the Persians and the Indians. Perhaps he was one of the first people in history to have worked by breaking down barriers.



TRAVEL LOUNGE ALAMY COURTESY OF LE MIRAGE

3 JOURNEY **Lebanon to Syria**
From Jubayl, a small city on the Sea of Lebanon, you drive to Baalbek in the Bekka valley, and end up in Palmyra. You feel as if you are travelling in time. Jubayl is Venetian. When you are in Baalbek you are in Rome. When you get to Palmyra you are in the city of Queen Zenobia. I was probably 12 or 13 years old when I first went. I've recently taken my kids to Palmyra. I have three girls and one boy and for the girls it was wonderful to hear about this queen who challenged Rome. It is serene—green in a land of deserts, mountains in the Middle East where it is mostly flat. The sunrise in Palmyra at 4 o'clock in the morning is spectacular

4 BEACH **Masirah, Oman**
I first saw this beach from the air There was nobody on it, only turtles—big turtles swimming in the sea. I'd been to see something along the coast and on the way back to the hotel we flew over this beach in the helicopter. I was so excited, I said "put me down". And then they went and they left me there. I was alone with the turtles

5 CITY **Rio de Janeiro**
Rio is probably the most wonderful natural sight that I've ever seen. The seaside, the mountains, the vegetation, the colours, the seasons, even the people: everything is contrasted. It's not a peaceful city, it's a tortured city—tortured by its beauty, its violence. It's a city that makes you feel alive all the time Nothing is secure or certain. In other cities you feel a bit important, but Rio always brings you back to the fact that you are nothing next to all of this

6 BUILDING **Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, Moscow**
My favourite buildings are all religious and I'm always impressed by big buildings This cathedral, the most important place of the Orthodox church, was destroyed by Stalin. Thanks to Orthodox Christians across the world, Yuri Luzhkov, mayor of Moscow, rebuilt it exactly the way it was. When I visited, the church was full of believers, some of whom had been waiting 12 hours to see the hand of St John the Baptist. The architecture, drawing, painting, the dedication, the story of the cathedral—it moved me greatly

7 HOTEL **Le Mirage, Tangier**
I like the beauty of the beach and the hospitality of the Moroccans, who make you feel happy and at home. This hotel is on a rock near the Pillars of Hercules. Tangier has seen so many myths and legends. It's at the intersection of many worlds—Africa and Europe, the Mediterranean and the Atlantic

SNAPSHOT

Good Friday in Ecuador

Jet-age tourists flock to the old colonial district of Quito to watch a procession that has been taking place for centuries and re-enacts the sufferings of Christ two millennia ago. In the world's second-highest capital, perched in the Ecuadorian Andes, purple-hooded penitents proceed from the church of San Francisco at midday, the hour when Pontius Pilate condemned Jesus to death. As thousands look on, some carry crosses, others have their feet chained or wrap real thorns around their heads. Women, also robed in purple and in black shrouds, honour those who comforted Christ by wiping the blood and sweat from his face. Although colourful, it is a solemn occasion, as befits the darkest day in the Christian calendar. ~ REBECCA WILLIS

EVENING

The Mission

WILL SMITH learns something new.
NO 3: SOUFFLES

A soufflé scares people.

It may be just eggs, flour and butter, but a soufflé can go oh so wrong. Open the oven door at the wrong moment and your delightful dish turns into an inedible cave-in of hot goo. Making one is the culinary equivalent of a kiss on a first date–go in too soon, or too late, and there's simply no salvaging things. But if you get it right, in both instances women are really impressed. It's one down from being in a band, but several up from being able to name all the Bond films in chronological order.

So, hoping to discover how to wow people at dinner parties, I find myself trudging through Paris looking for the chef Olivier Berté's "Cours de Cuisine" school. I'm on foot partly because getting to the front of the queue at the Gare du Nord taxi rank looked like it would take longer than the trip from London. Also, I'm aware that the space in my head that used to be taken up with A-level French has been replaced with tactics for playing "Halo" on the XBox. This renders me potent in an online firefight, but means I'm lacking when it comes to giving directions to a Parisian taxi driver.

I'm anxious. If my French isn't good enough to convey a two-line address, it certainly won't sustain a soufflé lesson. And straight away I'm in the rough–I mistake M. Berté's gesture that I hang my coat on the rail as an invitation to put on one of the white chefs' jackets hanging there. I button myself in, then notice that Olivier looks apprehensive. I glance down: there is a name stitched on my breast pocket. Olivier Berté. This is like picking up Eric Clapton's guitar at a soundcheck and stumbling through "Layla" with my hands covered in chip grease.

Once I've replaced Olivier's jacket with an apron, I'm ready to go. First, I melt some butter, adding some flour to make what Olivier calls "roux". Then I heat some milk, and he shows me how to mix it into the roux to make "béchamel". I take over. I start off pretty cocky, briskly whisking away–until my fluid turns first to a paste, and then into a heavy sort of glue. My whisking slows. My arm aches. I feel like Pete Doherty trying to run a marathon.

Egg yolks are added, then cheese, prawns or chocolate. Cheese is easy, I'm no stranger to the grater. But chocolate you have to melt over a pan of hot water–the main challenge being not to dive into it like Augustus Gloop in Willy Wonka's factory. Next comes beating the egg whites. I strongly recommend using an electric whisk for this. I tried it both ways, and manually beating egg whites in plain view of a power whisk is like making love to Barbara Windsor while Sienna Miller sulks in the corner.

Barbara/Sienna gets folded into the cheese, prawn and chocolate mixtures, which we then spoon separately into little pots and put in a hot oven. The rough cooking time should be "vingt minutes", Olivier claims. Yet, infuriatingly, he actually cooks them by sight: he looks through the oven door at the rising crusts, says "Encore, cinq secondes...Voilà, c'est prêt!" and then the soufflés were done. I barely understood the French, let alone how he knew they were ready.

Then came the fun part: the tasting. We'd cooked four portions each of the cheese, prawn and chocolate mixtures. That the resulting soufflés were otherwise going to get thrown away is my excuse for falling upon all of them like David Hasselhoff in a distillery. They were each very tasty, but naturally the chocolate one was my favourite. If there's a chocolate option, there's only really one option.

I'm feeling pretty good, until a singer friend of mine texts me to say he's in London, and do I want to see Hawkwind? I text back that I'm learning how to make a soufflé in Paris. How un-rock'n'roll. Still, a perfectly risen pudding is likely to impress a bunch of thirty-something women–which I guess makes me at least the James Blunt of the kitchen. ■

Next issue: Will Smith joins the circus

the cufflink connoisseur

creativity, character & craftsmanship

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